

JEAN DANIÉLOU

The
Salvation of
the Nations



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THE SALVATION OF THE NATIONS

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by

JEAN DANIELOU

Translated

by

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“ . . . qui diligunt adventum eius.”

2 *Timothy*, IV. 8.

FOREWORD

THIS little book is not written from the standpoint of concrete missionary activity, which grows out of various movements dedicated to that end. Nor is it written from the standpoint of the spirituality of Catholic Action, which is a somewhat different approach. Yet it answers the need for a genuinely missionary spirituality, as expressed in Christ's prayer for the peoples still shut out from the Gospel. Thus it brings both a broadening and a deepening of the missionary perspective.

A broadening, first of all, by answering the need for an extension of our prayer to the entire universe, even though the scope of our apostolate be restricted to our immediate milieu, by virtue of the infinite efficacy of desire of which Catherine of Siena speaks. A deepening as well, by teaching us to live the missionary life within ourselves, like a hidden mystery.

This approach to missionary spirituality may be expressed by the word mystery. The mission is this mystery, this secret hidden within God even before the creation of the world, that all nations may be gathered in the unity of the Mystical Body. This mystery is unfolded according to a divine plan; prepared by the vocation of the Jewish people, substantially realized by the mission of the Word, Who by His admirable Ascension introduced human nature for all eternity into the sphere of life of the Trinity; and this plan is to be accomplished among the various peoples of the world, one after another, during the time between Pentecost and the Second Coming.

Yet, just as Christ has already fulfilled within Himself and prefigured the salvation of the whole human race, likewise we can, in our turn, invisibly accomplish, prefigure and prepare universal salvation by assuming inwardly, through prayer, the peoples that are still strangers to the Gospel, so that there may even now exist, though hidden, this mystery of perfect praise that will be manifested at the end of time.

The understanding of this mystery is the sole and proper object of this collection of essays. We shall entreat the Virgin Mary to gather us into the centre of the soul, the centre of the world, where Christ's prayer accomplishes its work of unity.

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CHAPTER I

THE CURRENT IMPORTANCE OF THE MISSIONARY QUESTION

THE missionary question may seem to have been pushed into the background at the present time, in view of the urgency of other problems. The spiritual and temporal revival of the West appears to be a task of such vast importance and exigency as to consume all our efforts. I should like to show, however, that in certain fundamental aspects, missionary spirituality is the answer to some of the gravest problems of our day.

Let us make two things clear at the outset. First, that missionary spirituality is Christian spirituality, envisaged in all its amplitude; it is Christianity lived on a cosmic scale—to use a word much in vogue at present, and particularly apt in this case. Christianity can, of course, be lived within the narrow limits of the community of which we are a part, whether it be our family or our country. To view Christianity in this light is not to see it in its true perspective.

Christianity is catholic by definition, that is, it embraces the world. A Christian spirituality that is not fundamentally oriented toward the building up of the total Mystical Body is not a catholic spirituality. Some Christians develop an inferiority complex in the presence of other movements (particularly Communism) because they have a feeling that others possess a greater breadth of vision than they. This is because their own conception of Christianity is too circumscribed.

Many of us accept as entirely normal that Catholicism is the religion of France, Italy, Spain and South America, but we also seem to take it as normal that it is *not* the religion of India or China. Thus, we cling to the notion that Catholicism is the religion of a certain number of countries. This greatly diminishes our effectiveness. Catholicism must embrace the entire world; in our prayer and in the orientation of our interests, we must live on a world scale. If we do that, Christianity will truly be the fresh breathable air that it was destined to be.

There is a second reason why the missionary problem is most urgent. Let us not imagine that missions consist only in making contact in distant lands with civilizations that are different from our own. The missionary problem is at our very door. I am not speaking of the missionary problem in its broadest sense, as one might speak of France the land of missions, or say that our first duty is to convert the pagans in our own country. I am speaking of the missionary problem in its exact sense, that is, the problem of evangelizing the pagans. This problem is at our very door, in our very midst, and it has two aspects:

1. It is no longer necessary to go to India or China to seek out these civilizations. They are flowing back towards us. I am referring here particularly to Buddhism and Hinduism. There is no need whatever to go to India or Tibet to be in contact with these religions. Many Western minds are preoccupied with them, in some cases intensely so. I shall return to this matter later. Suffice it now to say that this is one of the points to be considered.

2. Inversely, if we do go to India or China, let us not suppose that problems there are any different from those we face at home. Communism is truly a world problem, and, for a country like China, it is fully as important as Buddhism. China, and *a fortiori* Russia, no longer present

solely the problems of the Orthodox Church and of Buddhism. They both present the problem of Communism.

Thus we see how barriers disappear in the world in which we live. We find ourselves in the presence not of geographically separated civilizations so much as of a number of universal movements which encompass the entire world. Today the world is faced with a conflict between a few great spiritual movements, each professing to offer the one and only cure for a sick humanity.

Chief among these great movements are Communism; Islam; Buddhism and all that comes within its sphere; and Christianity. Therefore, missionary problems are no longer a matter of remote civilizations, very different from our own. They are a matter, first, of what is vital for the human beings of today. It is our duty to live in harmony with the realities of our age.

I should like to develop this last point by showing that there are two grave problems which often confront us, and on which there is direct missionary bearing.

The first is syncretism. Syncretism, as you know, conceives of a universal religion that is to transcend all particular religions. It holds that these latter each possess a part of the truth—Hinduism no less than Islam, Judaism, Catholicism, or Protestantism. Its task, as it sees it, would consist in dissolving oppositions by rising above them to a superior religion which would embrace all the others. Every soul that would weigh the value of its Catholicism must face this problem, and ask itself: Why am I a Catholic rather than a Buddhist or a Moslem? It will not suffice to answer: Because I was born a Catholic. That is a wholly unsatisfactory answer. That is tantamount to saying: Had I been born elsewhere, I should have been of another faith. That is to place all religions on the same level.

The second problem confronting us is one of civilization rather than of spirituality. It is the problem of the unity of human civilization. Until the present time Christianity has been the source of unity in Western civilization and in human civilization as a whole. But is Christianity still capable of assuring unity to civilization? The Communists, for instance, say: "Up until now Christianity has fulfilled a certain function. It has succeeded in bringing about human unity, but we think it can no longer do this, that it is an ageing and outworn notion. We consider ourselves Christianity's heirs, retaining all that seems to us good in it, and yet surpassing it."

Let us investigate the first question, that of syncretism. There are many souls today that have a deep-seated need for spirituality, but admittedly have found no satisfaction in the Catholicism which has been offered them. Whence the notion, arising in some minds, of seeking a new spirituality that will correspond more closely to the needs of the soul. Now, where is such a spirituality to be found? Many are tempted to seek it in the Orient, and especially in the religions of India. We are confronted by a real trend affecting some of the most vital people, that is, the people who aspire to a spiritual life—a trend that would turn them away from Catholicism and toward Hinduism and its spiritual methods.

Everyone has read Lanza del Vasto's book, *Pèlerinage aux Sources*.¹ It is the story of a European who withdrew from our present-day restless, mechanistic, materialistic Western civilization, and went to India in search of new spiritual vitality. One of the great differences between the Western and the Oriental worlds is that in the West spirituality shows itself less; it is absent from the public

¹ Paris, Denoel, 1943. 407 pp.

places; it is not to be encountered in the street. In the streets of the West there is only agitation, dispersion. But when you go to India, you are struck by the fact that, there, spirituality abounds in the street. In India the hierarchy of values places wisdom above science, and immeasurably above conquest. In consequence, the atmosphere there is much more spiritual. This does not mean Hindu spirituality is superior to ours, but that Hindu civilization is more permeated with spirituality than is Western civilization.

I am reminded also of other books, such as *L'Expérience Intérieure* by Georges Bataille,¹ which is an effort to create a natural spirituality independent of all dogmatism; and seeks to hold on to St. John of the Cross and Saint Teresa without believing in Christ, nor in the Blessed Trinity, nor in the Church.

All this betrays an unrest which we must very definitely take into account. For where do these restless souls end up? With the idea that adherence to a particular *credo* is perhaps not indispensable to spirituality; that outside of and above all *credos* there may be a universal wisdom in which all men may commune, and of which Buddha, Mohammed, Jesus, were great pioneers, each having revealed one aspect of the total wisdom, but none having had a monopoly of absolute Truth.

This syncretism is no present-day invention. It is as old as Christianity. From the very origins of Christianity we find there were analogous movements. The first heresies of the days of the Apostles, particularly Gnosticism, were compromises between Christianity, Judaism, and the pagan religions of the epoch. The Gnostics believed there existed, above particular religions, a higher truth to which initiates might rise.

¹ Paris, Gallimard, 1943. 252 pp.

How much truth is there in this movement? We must remember that every error has a portion of truth, without which it would have no efficacy whatever. Indeed, there is a portion of truth in every religion. We Christians are the first to recognize this, inasmuch as we know that pagan humanity is not abandoned by God. We know that while paganism does not enjoy the immense benefits of Revelation in its search for truth, there none the less subsists in it a certain natural knowledge of God. Though this knowledge is profoundly falsified, deformed and distorted, it subsists even within the coarse idol worshipped by the Senegalese native.

It is also true that Christianity has been enriched by many external contributions during the course of its development. For example, when it penetrated the Hellenistic world, Christianity adopted certain ritual formulas which belonged to that world; and it made use of Greek philosophy or of Roman law as means of expressing its message.

Likewise, if Christianity is to penetrate India, it will have to become incarnate in what is best in the civilization of that land. For example, Christianity will have to utilize India's methods of spirituality and of recollection as well as India's very profound sense of God. Thus, it is true that genuine religion must embrace within itself all the spiritual riches of the world.

Finally, it is true that in this vague yearning after a truly vital spirituality there is a seeking that is excellent, and Catholicism too often fails to satisfy it—at least, as it reaches them. We, too, should multiply our schools of wisdom. We, too, should teach those around us that we must first of all know how to discipline ourselves, how to set up a correct hierarchy of values, how to be recollected and to be inwardly silent before acting. We try to

accomplish these things by means of retreats and days of recollection. But who takes part in these retreats and days of recollection? How great is the multitude totally ignorant of the blessings of the interior life! In our world the interior life is a rare pearl, to which only a few souls have access. It must be made available to many more. It must become a widely scattered treasure. Then will Christian souls find in their religion real sustenance.

Thus, syncretism contains elements of value. But it remains a caricature and a distortion of true Catholicism, and to accept it is to deny the very essence of Christianity, namely catholicity. For it amounts to placing Catholicism on the same level with all other religions, whereas the catholicity of Catholicism consists in the fact that it is the true religion and the religion of all men. It is a religion that does not exclude the riches of other forms of spirituality, but recaptures and adopts them in order to assimilate them.

Why is this? By what right can we say this? Precisely because Catholicism is the religion instituted by God Himself. This is the answer, the sole answer, but one which is absolutely decisive, to all arguments for syncretism. There is in history a furrow made by God. This is the great proof of Catholicism, and is one of the most astonishing facts to come out of any objective study of the world. God intervenes in history to accomplish a certain plan. We first glimpse this plan when He makes the first covenant with Abraham and thereby founds what is to become the Judaeo-Christian religion.

This decision of God's is followed by a series of new interventions. God renews His covenant with Moses and reveals to him the principles of true morality in the Decalogue. He renews it with the Prophets, and prepares the Jewish people to become the missionaries of the

Revelation. Then in the fulness of time, as Saint Paul says, the Word of God Himself, Who until then has spoken through the intermediary of the Prophets, becomes man and comes into the world. Henceforth He is the cornerstone of the true Church which is to be the home of all humanity, and into which all peoples will be gathered. This Church of which Christ is Founder and Head was entrusted to His Apostles, so that they may build it up through the ages, and so that it may embrace all peoples.

Thus, the essential difference between Catholicism and all other religions is that the others start with man. They are touching and often very beautiful attempts, rising very high in their search for God. But in Catholicism there is a contrary movement, the descent of God towards the world, in order to communicate His life to it. The answer to the aspirations of the entire universe lies in the Judæo-Christian religion. The true religion, the Catholic religion, is composed of these two elements. It is the religion in which God's grace has made answer to man's cry. In other religions grace is not present, nor is Christ, nor is the gift of God. The vanity and illusion of syncretism lies in its belief that universality is a common denominator of all religions.

Now, this is false. Veritable unity exists only in Christianity, which is the Heavenly Jerusalem descended from on High, like a Bride adorned for her Bridegroom. The Heavenly Jerusalem comes from on High, comes from God, and descends from the very bosom of the Trinity. The Church is an emanation of the Trinity as a whole. It comes from the love of the Father, it is accomplished through the Word, and its soul is the Holy Ghost. That is why it is divinely founded and divinely constructed. There flows through it an incomparable life, which is the life of God Himself. This, human religions cannot give. That is why

they are infinitely poor compared to the riches of Catholicism.

The second question with which we must grapple might be formulated: Communism and unity. The idea of attacking the problem from this angle came to me through a conversation with a friend. We were talking of the current situation. He was saying: "The real problem of the present is the union of the Churches." I must admit this gave me quite a jolt at first. Indeed, his approach was more Christian than mine, for I had thought the most urgent problem was peace and the reconstruction of devastated countries. In short, I was thinking of all the problems that concern us every day. He continued: "I think it is the problem of the union of the Churches, because the big question today is whether Christianity will be strong enough to re-create its unity, and in consequence to serve as the basis for a single civilization." Evidently, a dis-united, divided Christianity is powerless to re-create the unity of civilization. Consequently, the question is whether, in the face of movements like Communism, Christianity is strong enough, whether it still possesses enough vitality to become this principle of unity.

Indeed, one of the big problems confronting us today is that of the unity of civilization. Men are increasingly in contact with one another. As a result, every occurrence has a cosmic, universal repercussion, and the aspiration toward a world society which would embrace the whole human race is intensified. This aspiration finds a very special embodiment in Communism.

It has been truly said that Communism possesses an eschatology, a Messianism, a religious element. This eschatology, this Messianism is the myth of the classless society, that is, of a world in which all barriers between

men—barriers of race, nationality and class—have been demolished. This aspiration towards a really united world, where there would be no more barriers of money or birth, and where, within a just hierarchy, there would exist a far more fraternal spirit, is a noble one. It is the projection into the realm of the temporal of a spiritual reality: it is the laicization of the Heavenly Jerusalem.

The fundamental strength of Communism lies in what it retains of Christianity. Communism offers to men the Christian ideal, that is, the ideal of the Communion of Saints, the ideal of the Mystical Body, of a society in which all men shall be united; but at the same time—and this is what satisfies human pride—it makes man believe that he himself must achieve it, and that he must not expect anything from God. It is to return to Babel and renounce Jerusalem. It is to make man himself the creator of this society in which the whole human race is to be united.

In the face of this, is our Christian claim that we can bring about the unity of humanity strong enough? Here is the problem we have to solve. Have we not practically renounced this claim? And has not this setback for the Redemption led us to accept as a matter of course that there are Catholics and Protestants and Orthodox Christians—that is to say, that Christianity itself is divided and that it is the religion only of Europe and of a part of America? Catholicism loses its hold on souls in the measure that it ceases to present as an urgent task, to be accomplished as soon as possible, the unity of all men within a single religion.

Here we are faced with two grave problems: the first is the division of Christianity. This is an aspect of the missionary problem, which is concerned not only with Oriental civilizations but also with the separated Christian lands. Are we painfully enough aware of the scandal of

this separation? First of all, in the order of prayer, do we pray often enough for the reunion of our separated brothers? The only thing to which we aspire, if we are truly Christian, is the total building up of the Mystical Body, for this is God's work. Not a day should pass without our praying especially for this intention. It is distressing enough that there are men outside the Church. It is even more distressing that among those who profess to follow Christ there are divisions, and that for them the unity which Christ pointed to as the very mark of His Church—"that they may be one, as we also are"—does not exist.

How will all this end? It is a great mystery. Whenever we touch upon this development within Christianity through the course of history, we constantly strike against mystery. We have the impression that the ways of God are not ours, and that He directs events in a manner that baffles our imagination. For one, the history of the Jewish people is absolutely baffling. That this people who had for centuries prepared the coming of Christ should have been rejected at the moment when Christ appeared is a profound mystery. Saint Paul throws some light on it in the Epistle to the Romans by showing that it was practically a necessity in order that the Gentiles might enter the Church in throngs.

The problem of the unity of the Churches is equally mysterious. The more contact we have with our separated brothers, the more we enter into this mystery, into the domain of pure faith. One feels that here prayer alone can be efficacious. Some may have thought—it was perhaps an evil thought—that Communism by its persecution of the Orthodox Church in Russia might open the way for Catholicism, inasmuch as the Orthodox Church was inseparable from Czarism. I mention this phase of the problem because it matters so much now. At the time of the

Russian Revolution the Orthodox Church was completely a state religion, and one might easily have surmised: to the extent that the old regime crumbles the Orthodox Church will also crumble, along with the social order into which it is incorporated. Now, exactly the opposite happened. The Orthodox Church, far from crumbling with the temporal regime, was purified. What had weighed heavily upon it was precisely the fact that its priests and bishops tended far too much to be administrators, and to be too deeply enmeshed in politics. They were thrown into prison, they were deprived of everything, and in poverty, nakedness and privation they found something much purer and altogether in line with Orthodox Christianity. The result will be, I think, that in the coming world we shall be confronted with an Orthodox Church more vigorous and more active than it has been in the past because it will be purer and more universalist.

Moreover, Communism, after having laboured to destroy the Orthodox Church as united to Czarism, is now faced with an Orthodox Church with far fewer temporal ties, one therefore which it can more easily accept.¹ This is particularly true since the war because Orthodox Christians were among the best and most devoted soldiers. It is evident that, because of this, Stalin's government has put aside many of its suspicions with respect to the men who served it so well. Just as it was impossible after the war of 1914 to expel all religious from France, because they had been among the best soldiers, likewise after the war of 1940 it is impossible for Russia to persecute the Orthodox Church because Orthodox Christians have been among the bravest defenders of Russia.

Finally, now that Russia has become one of the great

¹ It must be added that Communism is making use of the Orthodox Church, and here lies a danger of the return to the servitude of the Church to the State.

powers and that its influence is destined to extend all over the world, the Orthodox Church will benefit from Russia's might. In consequence, we shall be faced with a problem that hardly existed before: the Orthodox mission. There have been Protestant and Catholic missions; there have been very few Orthodox missions. In the future there will be Orthodox missions in the measure that Russia expands and carries along with her whatever remains of her past, particularly the Orthodox religion.

It must be added that the Orthodox religion has in its favour an extraordinary liturgical power, with a great fascination for the souls of today. It possesses a certain tradition of prayer which we in our Roman tradition have in great part lost. To think that we are coming to twenty-minute Masses in some churches! That is a serious matter, because in such Masses the climate of prayer is not created. In such short ceremonies we do not get the impression created by those endless Russian ceremonies in which a liturgical climate is created that is both captivating and powerful, especially to the Asiatic mind.

Therefore, we must realize that in the Orthodox religion we shall be confronted by a powerful movement. In the face of this it is disastrous that unity, far from coming closer, seems farther away than ever—unless it is coming by ways that are not ours. From this point of view, God's designs are beyond our comprehension. What we must do, first of all, is to pray, and then to be watchful and clear-sighted. We must learn to recognize the good in others and realize that Catholicism must perhaps take certain exigencies into account if it is to answer the needs of human souls.

There are many analogous questions to ask concerning Protestantism. At one time Protestants turned toward what has been called Protestant liberalism, that is to say, a

Protestantism which was concerned above all with morality, and whose dogmatic aspects were greatly attenuated. Many Protestants did not believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ. They believed that Christ brought us a very noble ideal, but they rejected all dogma concerning the divinity of Christ and of the Blessed Trinity. At the present time, however, there is a strong dogmatic rebirth among Protestants, and the younger generation of Protestants are men of great faith. Their master, the great Calvinist theologian Karl Barth, who is one of the finest figures in Europe today and who wrote from Basle incomparable pages on Nazism, has been, so to speak, the very incarnation of the spiritual resistance.

Thus, here is a Protestantism that is coming closer to Catholicism. Yet, in so doing it becomes more vigorous because it has more Catholic elements and a greater portion of truth, and thereby attains far greater efficacy and becomes far more capable than it was of answering the needs of souls. This is, of course, a great homage it renders to Catholicism. The rebirth of Protestant dogmatism is a cause for great hope, and we should rejoice to see Protestants coming back to fundamental dogmas and drawing so much closer to us.

A second question which concerns the missionary problem more directly: Catholicism's power of expansion. Has not this power declined? And is not present-day Catholicism somewhat shrivelled up within itself, having lost the sense of its evangelical mission among the non-Christian peoples? If this were true, it would be something to grieve over. It would indicate that Catholicism no longer seeks to conquer the world, that it has become resigned in the face of certain barriers, that it is stopped by them, that it runs foul of them, and that it has lost hope of overthrowing them.

I return once again to the problem I raised earlier: Has Catholicism renounced the task of unifying humanity? Is it resigned to internal divisions? Is it resigned to running foul of civilizations that are impermeable to it, and that are more and more penetrated by Communism? Is Communism, indeed, becoming more universal than Catholicism? The problem is most serious. In the presence of Communism's universalism the problem of Catholic universalism becomes most acute. There is a Christian testimony to be borne everywhere. Consequently, there is need of faith in Christ, Who said to His Apostles: "Going therefore, teach ye all nations, *omnes gentes*." We must, after all, decide to obey.

Whence the importance of the missionary problem. If we want to answer Communism, we must first of all turn in the direction of universalism. We accomplish more against Communism by labouring for the expansion of Catholicism in non-Christian lands than we do by disputing about the distribution of wealth or increase of production in our own country. These are not the essential things. The fundamental problem is spiritual, and it is on the spiritual level, first of all, that the battle must be fought. As St. Paul tells us, it is with the princes of this world that we must fight. The missionary perspective embraces the world itself, and this is the battlefield on which the great conflicting movements are coming to grips.

CHAPTER II

THE MISSION OF THE WORD

ACCORDING to Our Lord's words, "As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you,"¹ missionary life is an extension of that first mission, that is, the sending by the Father of His Son into the world. That first mission remains the point of departure, the sole origin, the source of all other missions. There is, in truth, only one mission, that one; and all the others are but its participations and derivations. So, if we return to that prime source, we shall find that it is the origin of all missionary activity. This mission of the Word was unfolded through history in several successive manifestations. Let us consider these manifestations. Each of them will open up to us an important missionary problem.

We shall begin by talking about the mission of the Word in the pagan world, that is, the presence of the Word among non-Christians. No man is a stranger to the presence of the Word, and this brings us at once to the whole problem of pagan religions and their significance. Next, we shall study the mission of the Word in the Jewish world, and what progress it represents by comparison with natural revelation. Finally, we shall see what is the full mission of the Word, that is, the Incarnation of Our Lord, and the progress it manifests in the accomplishment of Christ's mission.

Of the three Divine Persons, why was it the Word Who was sent forth? Why did not the Father become

¹ *John*, XX, 21.

man? Or the Holy Ghost? This is explained to us by what Scripture, particularly the New Testament, tells us concerning the person of the Word and His relation to the Father. The Word, as His very name implies, *Verbum*, *Logos*, is the element of expression in God, whereas the Father is the element of origin and principle. The Father expresses Himself through His Word, Who is His image. As Saint Paul says in an admirable text of the Epistle to the Colossians: "(He) is the image of the invisible God."¹ Or again, in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "(He is) the figure of His (the Father's) substance."² Therefore He is, as it were, an image in which God sees Himself and is pleased.

Therefore, it is natural that if, as certain Fathers of the Church have said, the Father is Silence, whereas the Word is Expression—and this is in the eternal generation of the Word, inasmuch as the Father expresses Himself eternally through His Word, prior to all creation—then it is also normal that there should be a special relation between the Word and creation. The Word is the substantial and eternal image of God. Creation is like a reflection of this image, the image of the image, as the Fathers of the Church used to say. That is what we find in the mysterious and pregnant prologue of Saint John that we read every day at Mass: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him." He was with the Father from all eternity, and it was through Him that everything was created. Or again, as Saint Paul says in the Epistle to the Colossians: "He is the first-born of every creature."³ At first glance, this expression seems mysterious to us because the Word is not a creature. He exists eternally. But He is the first-born of every creature

¹ Colossians, I, 15.

² Hebrews, I, 3.

³ Colossians, I, 15.

in the sense that it is through Him that all creatures were created. And that is why the Epistle to the Colossians adds: "All things were created by him and in him."¹

This is very important in stressing the bond that exists between the Word and creation; that is why, when the Word came into the world to save it, Saint John was able to say: "He came unto his own"—His own domain, among His own people—"and his own knew him not." But, at any rate, He came into His own domain. Thus, when the Word came into the world at the Incarnation, it was not by accident, as if the world had gone on without Him until then, and He had come only at that particular moment. But from its origin the world was His. It was by Him that the world had been made, it was through Him that the world was held together. In consequence, when He came into the world, He came into His own domain, He came among His own. And on this were founded the various missions of the Word in the world, through which the Word was to come in order to achieve His work, and little by little bring it to fruition.²

Now, we can start from a fundamental consideration, namely, the universal character of the religious fact. It is on this base that the missionary apostolate was later to be founded. As we come to understand the peoples of antiquity better through new research, and as we come to know more about the pagan peoples of the present through missionaries, it is manifest that no matter how far back we go in the history of the world we find a religious mentality everywhere and at all times, that is to say, a cult rendered

¹ *Colossians*, I, 16.

² This bond between the Word and Creation has been brought to light in particular by Saint Irenaeus. See Jules Lebreton: *History of the Dogma of the Trinity, from its Origins to the Council of Nicaea . . .* translated by Algar Thorold. London, Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1939. Volume II.

to a superior power. We might note in passing that atheism, irreligion, is a purely modern fact. It is not to be found in the past history of the world, and it appears foreign to human nature. We get the impression that atheism is always a kind of abnormality. Man is by nature a religious animal.

And even in the modern world, is atheism really common? Are there so many men who live outside of all religion? In this connection we should note that a genuine religious attitude may exist without a true knowledge of God. By this I mean that there is a fundamental religious attitude wherever there is recognition of an absolute. Now, it can and often does happen in the modern world that men, for various reasons, are turned away from the knowledge of the true God and acquire false notions about existing religions.

Let us take, for example, the children of a country like present-day Russia, who have had Christianity presented to them in caricature. Evidently, these children will spontaneously reject this Christianity, for it will appear to them to be an aberration. None the less, they will continue to feel a religious hunger most of the time. This religious hunger will of necessity find appeasement somewhere: they will adore other things. For instance, they will accept the ideal of Soviet Russia as a kind of absolute for which they will be willing to give their lives. Will a complete absence of religion ensue? I do not think so. There will be a distorted, deformed religion, but the religious hunger, transposed toward another object, will none the less exist. The day true religion is revealed to these children, many of them will recognize what they have been groping for in various ersatz forms.¹

¹ See Canon Pierre Tiberghien, *Vie Intellectuelle*, November 25, 1934, p. 39 and ff.

There are very few men who are really atheists; what passes for atheism is mostly a falsification and distortion of religion. In general, this is what the missionary has to deal with. In consequence, his task is rather one of re-directing the religious sense so that it may attain its true object. He is not faced with a religious vacuum which he must fill, as it were, from zero.

The religious fact is pretty nearly a universal reality. What is the origin of this universal reality? How comes it that men everywhere possess a religion and believe in God? How is it that almost all men have a religion? This is the heart of the matter. If almost all men have a religion, it is because the *Logos*, the "Word of God," makes Himself known to them. "He enlightens *every man* who comes into the world," as Saint John tells us, and He accomplishes this in a twofold manner: First, He speaks to every inward man because no man is a stranger to the grace coming from Christ, and there is not a single man whom the Word of God does not obscurely and mysteriously solicit in the direction of goodness. In this respect we hold without exception that no man in the world is a complete stranger to God, and that even in the most culpable and warped soul the Word of God subsists, lying in wait, seeking to make the most of the slightest good intention, of the smallest good action. True, sanctifying grace is obtained only through Baptism, and it is the privilege of those only who possess Christ in His plenitude. But there also exists this predisposing actual grace, through which God acts in every human soul.

Then, there is the external manifestation of the Word in the world. Saint Paul says in the Acts of the Apostles that God did not leave Himself without testimony in the world.¹ Therefore there are testimonies of God through

¹ *Acts of the Apostles*, XIV, 16.

which He manifests Himself to men. The entire visible world should be conceived as a universe of signs through which the Word "makes signs" to men, and indicates to them that there are other things besides what they see. Poets have at times had intimations of this. Claudel expressed it admirably when he said that the world is a book, that is, a whole system of signs, and through these signs God speaks to us. For we must not look upon these signs impersonally, as a kind of symbolism. There is much more to it than that. It is a person who is making signs to each one of us. It is God Himself Who is perpetually making signs to every single man, through all the interventions that are His.

How does He do this? First, through the visible world, through the order of nature, through the very existence of things which arouse questions in men's minds. Where did this come from? How is that maintained in its proper order? . . . The proofs for the existence of God systematize all that, but these proofs often appear to us to be abstract, to be exercises in logic. They are valid, but they leave many men unmoved. But I am thinking now of something more elementary and more powerful than reason, to which reasoning merely gives form. It is said that there are not merely five proofs for the existence of God, but millions. All things are replete with proofs for the existence of God, for God makes signs to us through every created thing. The trouble is that we do not listen for these signs from God, these proofs of His existence. Thus, we must declare with the Church that it is easy to believe in God. This idea may at times surprise us, but it has been enunciated by the Vatican Council. Indeed, as Péguy says, we would have to do ourselves violence not to believe in God.¹ Our rationalism may muster up objections, but

¹ *Porche du mystère de la deuxième vertu*. Oeuvres Complètes, Paris, Editions de la Nouvelle Revue Française, 1916-1927, Volume 5.

our first movement must be to answer these signs from God and to bear witness to Him.

The proofs for the existence of God by purely intellectual methods are not the whole story. What is involved is the revelation of a presence. This presence of God may be manifested to us in a thousand different ways. God may at times speak to us more directly through our intelligence, and that is how we shall encounter Him. But God can likewise make use of events. Let us call to mind the words of Chateaubriand, "I wept and I believed." It will be said: That is not an argument. Yes, it is an argument; and for him it was the best, for it is the argument that led him to believe. He would have been absolutely impermeable to arguments, but he experienced the presence of God through suffering.¹

Again, persons whom we meet may often prove to be signs from God. Such and such a person may be a manifestation, a sign from God. Realizing this, we should be aware also of what a serious responsibility we have towards others. For, just as others may be signs from God for us, we also are signs from God for them. We are a language through which God speaks to others, just as others are a language through which God speaks to us. It rests with us to make this language intelligible and to permit this manifestation of God to pass through us.

For all of us there are two primary facts, God and ourselves, God and each of our souls. Then, between God and us there is the whole world of creatures through which God reveals Himself to souls, and through which souls commune with Him. Now, this includes not only the external world of things, but also the world of persons. The mission, truly understood, is an outstanding example

¹ See the excellent study by Jean Mouroux, "Structure personnelle de la foi", in *Recherches de la science religieuse*, 1939, p. 85.

of this. In the mission, it is essentially through the person of the missionary, through his testimony, that souls come into contact with God. It is the method He has chosen. It is our terrible responsibility that through our silence we can prevent God's messages from being disseminated.

Here we are entering the realm of the relations between the living God and living man. Indeed, the God of religion, He Whom we find through the Word of God, is a living Being, into whose presence we come. I insist on this word "presence". It is not an abstract idea, a general principle, it is a personal Being to Whom we have recourse. In consequence, the essential religious act is prayer. It is through prayer that we reach up to God and that we make proper response to the signs coming from God. Prayer, a protestation against the world, an avowal of our helplessness, is the act by which we ask God's assistance to help us rise out of our misery and provide for our wants. Prayer is the primordial religious fact.

All pagan religions attain some knowledge of God. However, since they have not the revelation of God Himself, they focus on the wrong object and often turn out to be gross caricatures of religion, although they sometimes arrive at truly noble ideas. All that is good in these religions comes from God, in respect to whatever intuition they can have of Him through the signs that He gives to them. On the other hand, all their vagaries and all their inadequacies ensue from the uncertainty and confusion which is endemic in them. There is something immeasurably moving in the thought of this great portion of humanity, religious at heart, groping after God but seeking Him in darkness, in *tenebris*, as the Canticle of Zacharias says, and sometimes failing to find Him because those whose mission it is do not bring Him to them, or present Him only in caricature. This is the great responsibility of all Christians,

for they are, as it were, visible manifestations of God in the world.

The second mission of the Word is His mission among the Jewish people. What is the nature of this mission, and what advance did the religion of Israel make over the natural religion of which we were just speaking? We are struck, first of all, in studying the Old Testament, by the fact that God appeared as a living God Who intervened directly in the life of the people. He did not merely make signs from a distance, as He does to the pagans; but he manifested Himself to His people, leading them in their peregrinations through the Egyptian desert, and chastising them when they turned away from Him. This interference by God in history is the Covenant.

The Jewish people still had very obscure and anthropomorphic notions of God. They pictured Him as giving expression to jealousy and anger. It demonstrates very well—and this is what is interesting about it—that the Jews, before learning to know God's true nature, before having a clear conception of Him, first came upon Him as an inescapable fact which upset their established ways. They were to grasp the full meaning of this fact only by degrees, exactly as we come only by degrees to appreciate the spiritual riches of a friend long after we have met.

In the second place, the Revelation of God to Israel is the Revelation of One God, and it is on this point, most of all, that Jewish Revelation marks an advance over other religions. This is what had to be instilled into the people, because the great temptation of that time was polytheism, which consisted in dispersing the religious urge among a multitude of entities and diverse beings. There was in this polytheism a certain recognition of divinity, but it involved a misconception of the fundamental unity of God.

How did God manifest His unity? In several ways.

Principally, according to the words of Scripture, by His jealousy which led Him to chastise His people every time they turned towards other gods—like a husband who claims the undivided love of his spouse and will not tolerate infidelity in her. This theme runs through the entire Old Testament. Every time the Jewish people were tempted to turn toward the gods of the Egyptians or the Babylonians—following the elementary logic that the power of these peoples was attributable to their gods and therefore, if these were mighty gods, it might be wise to pray to them—Yahweh always brought his people back to repose in Him, their only mainstay. Furthermore, Yahweh revealed to Israel that this One God is also the God of all other peoples, that He is the Only God, that all races are in His hand, and that while He has made a special covenant with Israel, He is still the God of the whole human race. All other gods are false gods.

There is still another aspect of this Revelation that leads us one step higher in the scale of religious knowledge: God reveals Himself as the God of holiness. Here we come to something even more essential to the knowledge of God, for holiness is what defines His absolutely unique and specific attribute with respect to all creatures, that is, excellence itself. It is an incomparable excellence by which He is, as it were, set apart from every created being, and by reason of which every creature is, as it were, tainted with impurity in His sight. It is a holiness which arouses in human souls the two essential religious feelings whose dialectic pervades the entire religious life of the Jewish people.

First, it creates a great attraction, because *sanctum* is also *augustum*.¹ The saint is the person who is august, he in

¹ See Otto, Rudolf: *The Idea of the Holy* . . . translated by John W. Harvey. London, Oxford University Press, 1936. Cf. pp. 52 ff. (*The Idea of the Holy. An Inquiry into the non-rational factor in the idea of the Divine and its relations to the rational.*)

whom we glimpse a perfection above all other perfection, a perfection that is infinitely desirable, that charms and attracts us with the power of the Psalms. At the same time, in the presence of this excellence, of this perfection of God's, we have a feeling of fear and almost of being rejected because contact with His holiness makes us aware of our own fundamental impurity, of our unworthiness, and in consequence we realize our profound need of being united to Him. True religious feeling is a combination of these two. If we have only the former—the desire to be united to God—without having the sense of His holiness and of His greatness, we run the risk of not purifying ourselves sufficiently. On the other hand, if we have only the latter—fear in His presence—without having enough trust, we risk having a purely negative attitude towards Him, one not sufficiently motivated by love. The total religious attitude is a union of fear and love.

We see how the Word, by means of all this pedagogy, was leading the Jewish people to the noble conception of God, which alone was to make possible the last stage of Revelation, to be found in Christ. Indeed, the mission of the Logos in the Old Testament is but to prepare for a third mission, the real one: the coming of Christ in the flesh in the fulness of time. That is what we find at the beginning of the Epistle to the Hebrews: "God who . . . spoke in times past . . . by the prophets . . . in these days hath spoken to us by his Son."¹ "In these days" means specifically at the time that Our Lord came into the world. At that moment, the Word, Who was already present in the world in a certain manner, manifested Himself fully by His Incarnation in the womb of the Virgin Mary. According to a very beautiful idea of Saint Irenaeus, before that time He had been in the world in order to accustom

¹ *Hebrews*, I, 1-2.

men to Him, and to accustom Himself to men.¹ It was only after He had completed this preliminary task of education, this preparatory work, that He came in the flesh through the Incarnation, in the fulness of time.

We shall now simply follow the Gospel of Saint John. After having said: "*In propria venit, et sui eum non receperunt*—He came unto his own and his own received him not" (that is the Old Testament), we come to: "*Et habitavit in nobis*—and dwelt among us." This life among us represented the decisive stage in the manifestation of the Word in the world. There is no time to explain this in detail here. Let us merely sketch, in two or three strokes, the outstanding characteristics of this new stage in the Revelation of the Word. Whereas in natural religion the existence of God is grasped, and in the Jewish religion the holiness of God is manifested, in the Christian religion we are introduced into intimacy with God, and this is the great richness of Christ's Revelation. This is so, first, because the essence of the New Testament is the revelation of the mystery of the Trinity, that is, the mystery of God's intimate life: we become aware of this vast life of love in God, by which the Father gives Himself to the Son, and by which the love of the Father and the Son is the Holy Ghost. We know this only because Christ revealed it to us. Thus, we contemplate Christ's life of union with His Father, this being the visible manifestation of the invisible life of the Divine Persons and of the circulation of love within God, of which the Trinity is simply the name.

Further, what Christ reveals to us and brings to us is a kind of participation in the intimate life of God. Obviously, this is the essential part of Christ's work. Christ, the Son of God, calls to us and makes us capable of participating in His sonship. He has made of us adopted sons

¹ Lebreton, *op. cit.*, Volume II.

of God. In so doing, He has introduced us into the family of God, into intimacy with God. Thus, ours is not only a relationship of creature to Creator, as defined by the Old Testament, a relationship founded on fear. We now become, in a manner, participants in the Divine nature, and in consequence we have the right to treat with Him as sons, on a footing of equality.

In this manner, the Word is made progressively manifest through the course of human history. Viewed as a whole, what is striking about this manifestation is its progressive character. Why does God not go about the fulfilment of His plan more quickly? Why was it necessary to start with such an obscure revelation? Why was it necessary to pass through the intermediary of the election of the Jewish people? And, transporting these questions to the contemporary scene, why must there be so many people who even today are at the stage of primitive Revelation, who are in the night of confused and obscure religion?

All this is explained in the divine pedagogy through which the Word prepared humanity little by little to receive in its fulness the message He came to give. In the beginning, He took humanity as it was, like a child, teaching it what a child can grasp, and bringing it only by slow degrees to an understanding of greater mysteries. It is very important for us to meditate on this method of God's, because it will help us better to understand what our own missionary attitude should be; we should not be impatient, but be able to contemplate the unfolding of this divine plan, to admire it and worship it in its mysteriousness and in its progressive development, meanwhile trying to hasten its fulfilment in every way we can.

For we can help in the work of the Word by being truly transparent signs, intelligible signs, through which He can manifest Himself to the world. The Word, as an

artisan working throughout the world to form a perfect humanity, must find in us instruments, collaborators. Let us bear in mind the beautiful words of Denys the Areopagite: "There is nothing more divine, among all divine things, than to co-operate with God in the salvation of souls." We must become labourers with this labouring God, Who toils, Who is active throughout the world to establish the only stable society, the Heavenly Jerusalem, the Jerusalem on High.

CHAPTER III

WHAT MUST LIVE AND WHAT MUST DIE

THERE are two ways of looking at the problem of missions. We shall try to bring out the portion of truth that exists in each of them. Let us take as an example the problem of evangelizing Islam at the present time. It can be conceived in two ways.

On the one hand we can say: Islam is an obstacle; if we want to implant Christianity in the souls of Moslems we must first of all destroy Islam within them, because so long as these souls are within the clutches of Islam they will remain impermeable to the Christian message. When, for instance, Mustafa Kemal, the great Turkish statesman, laboured to modernize Turkey by destroying the ancient institutions of the country—notably, giving women infinitely more liberty and substituting non-sectarian education along Western lines for Moslem teachings—some thought that by destroying Islam he was preparing the way for Christianity. They believed that it would be much better to deal with free-thinkers than with Moslems, and that the total absence of religion was better than false religion.

Then, there is another point of view. Louis Massignon, in a remarkable book on al-Hallāj¹ (a great Moslem mystic), has shown that Islam has been able to develop admirable souls. Rather than destroy Islam, might it then not be better to expand it? What is Islam? It is at bottom, the argument runs, inchoate Christianity. We must not replace it by free-thought, but on the contrary develop

¹ Louis Massignon: *La Passion . . . d'al-Hallāj, Martyr Mystique de l'Islam . . .* Paris, P. Geuthner, 1922, 2 vols.

the religious urge more deeply, and as this urge grows in souls they will feel the need to go beyond Islam. If a Moslem followed his soul's promptings to the end, he would come to Christ, for he would discover certain insufficiencies and lacunae within his own spirit. A man like Hallāj discovered this. He freed himself from some of Islam's errors, and came out with a very pure monotheism.

Thus, there are two completely different attitudes on the missionary question. Today there is a rather strong tendency to adopt the second: that is, to view non-Christian civilizations with great optimism, to recognize all that is worth-while in them, either from the human or the religious point of view, to consider them as being merely inadequate and needing Christianity to complement them. The theorist of this point of view has been Père Pierre Charles, and its great pioneers have been Père Labbe in China, Père Aupiais in Black Africa, and the Abbé Monchanin in India. The latter started out in 1938, determined to erect a Christian mysticism upon the Hindu structure.¹ As he sees it, there is no reason for our imposing on the Hindus the human environment in which the Gospel became incarnate among us, nor the Neoplatonic ideology through which Christian mysticism found expression. There can quite as well be an authentic Christian mysticism that is Christian in content but Hindu in structure. What is needed is that the Hindus continue to apply their own methods through which they attain to a genuine asceticism, but that they place these methods at the service of Christ. This involves, first of all, on the part of the missionary an effort to cast off his Western mentality completely in order to enter without reservation into the Eastern mentality;

¹The views of the Abbé Monchanin have been expressed in *L'Inde et le Christianisme*, in the *Cahiers Dieu Vivant*, Number III (Ed. du Seuil).

and once he has done this, to strive to make of this Eastern mentality a new incarnation, as it were, of Christianity. This transformation must be accomplished first inwardly, so that it can afterwards shine out among others.

In opposition to this optimistic attitude there is another, which holds that pagan religions are an obstacle far more than a preparation for the Gospel. That was the attitude of most missionaries in former days. It has recently been restated by a Protestant missionary, Hendrik Kraemer, a disciple of Karl Barth, in a book entitled *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*.¹ Here is a summary by Father Jean de Menasce of the essential thesis of the book:

“The central idea of the work is that the Christian message, being divine, finds in humanity nothing which prepares the way for it or contradicts it, so much so that its acceptance inevitably causes all that is human to collapse, by condemning the world which is sin and nothing but sin. The evangelization of the world is the translation of this unexpected message into a language that not only is not meant to bear it, but even belies it at every instant. This means that actually the world as a whole and religions in particular are in their entirety denials of God, revolts and negations.”²

Clearly, this attitude is at the opposite pole from the one presented earlier.

I should like to consider, by means of a few examples, the portion of truth that may subsist in each of these points of view. Then, I should like to show how they are complementary. This will demonstrate that a complete missionary spirituality is at once a spirituality of incarnation,

¹ *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, published for the International Missionary Council by Harper and Bros., London, 1938, 455 pp.

² *La Théologie de la Mission selon M. Kraemer*, Nouvelle Revue de Science missionnaire, 1945, p. 242.

inasmuch as the first thing to do is to implant the Gospel in these diverse souls and cultures; and it is also a spirituality and a mystery of redemption in the sense that something must none the less be destroyed and die. That is why this chapter is entitled: *What Must Live and What Must Die*—what must live and what must die in each pagan civilization, if it is to become Christian. What must live? That is to say, what will come to fruition in the Gospel? What must die? That is to say, what are the obstacles in the way?

According to the first point of view, Christianity completes everything that is good in the world. This has been a striking fact since the very origins of Christianity. A study of Christian origins is of the greatest importance to discover what Christ brought that was new and what He borrowed from the world of His day. It is undeniable that primitive Christianity borrowed much, first of all, from the Hebraic world in which it arose. Liturgy is an example. Catholic liturgy is derived almost entirely from Judaic liturgy.

What does the priest do when he says Mass? In the beginning of the Mass, up to the Offertory, he carries on what was done in the synagogues of Judaea at the time of Our Lord; at that time, on the Sabbath day, Saturday—we find examples of it in the Gospels—people assembled in the synagogue for the reading of the Old Testament interspersed with chants, psalms, and prayers. Now, the very same texts, the very same chants, the analogous prayers have been continued in the Church, merely supplementing readings from the Old Testament with readings from the New Testament. This is a typical example of how Christianity has prolonged institutions that had existed before, not destroying but merely completing them.

The second part of the Mass is wholly distinct from the first in its origins. It took place, originally, in the evening,

whereas the first part took place in the morning. It is a continuation of what Christ did on the evening of the Last Supper, and, in keeping with the traditional Jewish religious repasts, this was preceded by a blessing.¹ The Canon prayer is the prolongation of the prayer of benediction that began these repasts. However, this portion of the Mass terminates with something that was merely pre-figured in the Jewish religious repast: that is, the bread that is offered up is not merely a symbol; it is truly the Body and Blood of Christ. There again, we see how the Christian liturgy is the extension, the accomplishment, the consummation of the Judaic liturgy, of which it has suppressed almost nothing.

From another point of view, Christianity was born in a Hellenized world. Here again, it certainly borrowed much from the ideas of that world. Dom Casel believes that in the "mystery" of the Mass, that is, the religious reality which is at once effectuated and represented by means of rite, there is an idea that was current in the Greek world at the time of Our Lord, when there were mysteries such as the mystery of Isis, of Adonis, and of Mithras.²

What has Christianity done? Just as it borrowed the form of its prayer from the Jewish milieu, inasmuch as Christian prayer is an extension of Jewish prayer—prayer being a general religious category; likewise it borrowed from the Hellenistic world the form of the "mystery," which is another religious category. It has borrowed these religious categories, but filled them with a new reality.

Let us take another example, that of Christian mysticism. It is certain that this absolutely new and original religious

¹ On all these points see Baumstark, Anton: *Liturgie Comparée*, Edition of the Benedictines of Amay-s.-Meuse. 275 pp. n.d.

² See Dom Odo Casel, *Le Mémorial du Seigneur*, Editions du Cerf, Paris, 1945. This theory, open to question in respect to the origins of the Mass, contains some truth with regard to the fourth century.

experience, which had had no earlier equivalent, expressed itself by means of formulas and even by means of certain inward attitudes borrowed from Plotinus, from Neoplatonism, and from the asceticism then existing in the Hellenistic world. For instance, when we speak of the three ways to sanctification—the purgative way, the illuminative way, and the unitive way—we are using words that had already been used by Porphyry long before Saint John of the Cross and the Christian theologians. In fact, there are non-Catholic scholars who believe that this asceticism has been incorporated into Christianity and has corrupted it.¹ That, of course, is not so. What is certain is that here was a providential preparation of which Christianity made use.

It is most interesting to consider that this idea was given expression as early as the second century after Jesus Christ. Apologists like Saint Justin, for example, told the Greeks of that time that Plato had prepared the way for Christ, that the sibyl and Virgil had announced Him and had known Him beforehand. In *Eve*, Péguy took up this same theme magnificently when he described the pagan preparation for Christ's coming:

“Et les pas d’Alexandre avaient marché pour lui . . .
Et le dernier soleil pour lui seul avait lui
Sur la mort d’Aristote et la mort de Socrate.”

It was for Him, for Christ, the centre of the world, the centre of history, not only that the Jewish people had been prepared, but that all these pagan civilizations—the conquests of Alexander, the thinking of Socrates and Aristotle—had also been prepared. When Christ appeared

¹ See André Marie Jean Festugière, *L’Enfant d’Agrigente*, p. 119; and in opposition, Jean Daniélou, *Platonisme et Théologie Mystique*, Paris, Aubier, Editions Montaigne, 1944, p. 8.

it was not only because the Jewish people were ready to receive Him, but also because, on the one hand, Greek thought had completed the labour that was to enable it to give form to Christian theology, and because, on the other hand, Roman order had established in the Mediterranean Basin the social framework that was to provide the Church with some of her institutions.

From the missionary point of view, the problem at once arises whether what was true of the first and second centuries of our era is true today with respect to those lands that are still, *vis-à-vis* Christianity, in the same stage as were the Greek and Roman worlds at the time of Our Lord. Are India, China and Africa lands where in the designs of providence Christianity will find new categories, new forms of thought, new fulfilments? There may well be many aspects of Christianity that we have not yet discovered and that we shall not discover until Christianity has been refracted through every facet of the prism of human civilization. It has been refracted only through the Greek and Roman worlds, but it will have to be refracted through the Chinese facet and the Hindu facet in order to attain its total fulfilment; and this total fulfilment will not come through the conversion of individual men, but through the Christianization of all the civilizations of the earth. All of these civilizations must be permeated by Christianity, and Christianity must bring to blossom whatever in them has been in the nature of providential preparation.

This obviously opens up an immense field for reflection. In the measure that we study these civilizations, that we are in sympathy with them, the problem for us becomes one of understanding which of their aspects can be incorporated into Christianity and are to be nurtured. This requires a certain amount of stripping off of everything in

us that is merely Western because, after all, our Christianity is a Westernized Christianity. Now, it is accidental that Christianity should have been Westernized. We must learn to extricate from its cultural background the essential message of the Gospel, and place this message in contact with other civilizations, to see in what measure it is to become incarnate in them.

Let us take the world of Islam, which is a very particular case, for Islam appeared after the beginning of the Christian era and, on the whole, it was grafted on the Jewish trunk. It is an extension of Jewish monotheism and at the same time it contains certain elements derived from Christian heretics of Abyssinia with whom Mohammed came in contact. The history of Mohammed on this point is most interesting. Mohammed tore his people away from polytheism and brought them to the cult of the true God, the One God. In that respect, his role has certainly been admirable. Many religious elements have been incorporated into his work.

Thus there is in Islam a sense of the greatness of God, of His holiness, a horror of all anthropomorphism and a sense of mystery, all of which make impossible any representation whatever of God. It even goes so far as to make an understanding of the Incarnation very difficult for the Moslems, and this is what in Islam must die. But there also exists in Islam—and we shall stress this aspect for a moment—a genuine sense of the transcendence of God, which is an essential religious category. On this point we must not hesitate to say that the Moslems may well have much to teach us. They have a far greater sense of the urgency of God, of the presence of God in society, than we have in our Western civilizations. The proportion of Moslems who pray every day is far greater than the proportion of Europeans or Americans. God is, from this

point of view, deeply incorporated in their civilization. Mohammed was able to inculcate in his people an admirable religious sense.

You will remember how Psichari was dumbfounded when he saw Moslems praying out in the desert, and how he understood at that moment, as Carrel says in his little book on prayer, that prayer is a religious need as fundamental as breathing. One can stifle from lack of prayer just as one can stifle from lack of air. Indeed, our Western world, in its restless and activistic life, has completely lost this sense of prayer. That is why there are so many mentally ill and eccentrics in our midst: people don't pray enough. There is a well of silence within themselves to which they have no access, a domain of peace they know not how to enter. Islam has held on to these things. Therefore, should Islam be converted, we can imagine it would have a much more extensive religious social life than we have in our lands. Islam would then be in reality and forthwith a Christendom. In fact, this calls to mind our own Middle Ages, a period when civilization was deeply permeated by Christianity.

This sense of the greatness of God develops religious dispositions within men's souls, a sense of adoration, for example, and these are eminent religious qualities which we possess far too little. We of the West sometimes have a kind of familiarity with God, which in itself is good, but which may also involve a certain loss of the exalted sense of His holiness and of His greatness. This sense is profoundly imbedded in the Moslem mentality. I have taken the sense of God's transcendence as an example, for it is one of the notable characteristics of Islam. Other examples, of course, could be given.

Now, let us turn to India. In a sense, India is even more fascinating, for here is a world which unfolded entirely

outside of the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Islam contains, as we have said, Judaeo-Christian elements; and we can easily find those elements because ours is a common origin. India, on the other hand, is a total stranger to these origins. Well! There, too, we find eminent religious values. The first that may be mentioned is the sense of the unique reality of the invisible world. This is one of the most striking characteristics of Indian culture: the visible world is a mirage, and what really exists is the interior world.

This is an error, yet does not lack nobility. On this point, India is the antithesis of the African Negro world—it is curious how these diverse civilizations represent certain attitudes. The African Negro world is characterized by its profound immersion in the instinctive life. The Negroes are particularly gifted with respect to the imagination. There is great imaginative power in Negro art, deeply rooted in instinct. This is a remarkable gift, which would make, and has made, magnificent artists.

Thus, the day the Negro world is Christianized, one can foresee a prodigious sacramental and liturgical development, a religious art, a return to the sacred dance, which is now foreign to us. (After all, David danced before the Ark, and the dance is a means of praising God like any other.) I cannot conceive how African Negroes could praise God without dancing, for the dance is so much a part of their being that it is an integral part of their civilization. Through them we would discover once again the liturgical meaning of the sacred dance. This would have disconcerting consequences for us. How could we impose the Roman Mass on them—this silent Mass, so admirably Western, so sober, so inward, so discreet, so reserved, wherein the mightiest religious feelings find expression in perfect decorum? It delights us because it fulfils in the religious order those qualities of discretion, of

moderation, that are so eminently ours, that are the mark of our mystics and of our saints. But obviously it would arouse no religious enthusiasm whatever among the peoples of Senegal and Morocco. They need a different incarnation of Christianity, one that is in line with their instincts and with their entire being.

For India, there is no question of exuberance. On the contrary, it is the stripping of the imagination that predominates. It is not through signs that India would find its way to God, but far more through the void. African Negroes need symbols. Indians, at their very best, are embarrassed by symbols.¹ Their vision of God is much more naked, much more abstract, and it is precisely through this inward abstraction, through the void, through silence, that they find interior reality. In consequence, India would hold for us fewer great liturgists and liturgical revelations, and more mystics, more monastic and ascetic revelations. There is in India a monastic instinct. We are also familiar with the religious civilizations of Tibet and of China. Asia is like an immense monastery, merely waiting to put its aspirations at the service of the true God. The Hindus are striving toward the contemplation of this formless God, this Soul of all things, this principle which is the substance of all things. After all, this is the highest that man can attain through his own strength: the realization that above and beyond all multiplicity there is a certain unity into which we hope to plunge and to return, to lose ourselves and be dissolved. Indeed, this may be what is highest in the human order, but it remains infinitely below the revelation of the God Who is love, of the God of the Trinity, in Whom there is a life of eternal love, and Who calls us to participate in that life.

¹ While this is true of Buddhism, it would require some qualification in the case of Hinduism.

In India, contemplation ends in an obscure mist. There are no illuminating rays descending from the Trinity to pierce the fog and reach men's innermost hearts. Yet one cannot think without emotion of this great monastic civilization, of this instant search for God. What are we waiting for to bring them the true God? Yes, we should be on our way, and, like Saint Francis Xavier, we wonder what we are doing here when there are so many peoples waiting. Revelation must be carried to these peoples, so that their prayer may be a genuine prayer and so that it may be addressed to the true God. Now we can understand why the Abbé Monchanin left everything in order to try to take out to India the beginnings of an answer.

There is, then, a sense of expectation which existed in the early Christian era and continues to exist today among the entire civilizations and worlds whose riches Christianity is to complete. Yet there is much also that must die. The great civilizations we have just considered in their positive reality—Islam, for instance, and all that is in solidarity with it; Hinduism and Buddhism, the great and diverse cultures, religions, and philosophies of the Orient—remain, for all their excellencies, great obstacles between human souls and Christ. They are what the missionaries strike up against, what holds them back, what retains souls in error. We can well understand the indignation against these erroneous doctrines expressed by missionaries of former days, and the vehemence with which they spoke of them.

Let us come back to Islam. Beyond any doubt it erects a rampart against Christianity, perhaps the strongest of any—for there is nothing rarer than the conversion of a Moslem. In the end, even Father de Foucauld failed miserably in his efforts to convert the Moslems. This defeat was more important than a victory, in that it made

him understand that there was only one thing for him to do: To adore the Eucharist in the heart of the desert, to make a minute beginning and to pray in the name of the Moslems until such time as they might begin to pray themselves. All the same, the attempt to evangelize Islam appears to be a complete failure. It is like striking against a stone wall.

What is this wall? It is everything in Islam that must die, everything in Islam that is false, and everything in Islam that is (one can even go so far as to use the word) demoniacal. The great conflict between Christ and Belial that appears on every page of the Gospel goes on even today throughout the world. There is an evil power, a Satanic power, which holds souls in error and which persists.

It is interesting to note that in the first centuries of the Christian era many demoniacal phenomena appeared in countries in the process of being converted from idolatry to Christianity. The same is true of pagan civilizations today. In my research on the fourth century I was surprised to find a great recrudescence of magic practices at the very moment when Roman civilization under Constantine was about to be snatched away bodily from paganism and to enter, as Saint Paul says, into the kingdom of the Son; at that time, all the rites of sorcery took on an incredible virulence.

It was then that in the deserts of Nitria and Scete great monks who were the fathers of monasticism and of the contemplative life—above all Anthony, the most famous of them all—grappled with the Devil, in exactly the same way as the Curé d'Ars did eighty years ago in his presbytery, when the Devil was trying to snatch souls away from him.

You all know about Saint Anthony's temptation, the place it holds in literature, music and painting, and what a theme it has provided for infinite aesthetic variations

from Breughel to Flaubert. This temptation of Saint Anthony is one of the most dramatic episodes in the history of Christianity. It represents a supreme effort to tear the world away from the evil that is striving to hold it in bondage. Indeed, the real battle was fought in the desert far more than in Nicaea, where outwardly Constantine had all the advantage. It was Constantine who seemed to be Christianizing the world, but in reality it was Anthony who was tearing it away from the powers of evil. Anthony buried himself in the desert, that he might be in the thick of the fight. Indeed, Our Lord has told us that souls are to be won away from the Devil first by fasting and vigils, and that the great battle is fought in the heart of the desert, in the depth of solitude, on the summit of Carmel, before it is fought through the ministry of preachers, on the great highways and in the villages.

We must tear souls away from Satan first of all through prayer, penance and sacrifice. That is the most crucial combat, and we can take part in it even now. As for the rest, that is Christ's concern, and He sends forth His labourers when He will. But first there is a mystical battle, a spiritual conflict, more bloody than any human battle, as Rimbaud has said somewhere. God's real combats are fought in the interior world. There, we fight furiously, trying to free ourselves from all the wretched desires within us; there, saints suffer the assault of Satan himself, of the powers of evil.

This can help us to realize the dramatic and tragic nature of the missionary problem, inasmuch as it is a struggle to tear away souls and peoples from something that is opposed to Christianity, and is to its very roots the spirit of evil.

Well, there is in Islam a tremendous power of resistance. What is this power? It consists in Islam's own defects.

We have already spoken of Islam's greatness, of its very great sense of God. But it has grave defects. First of all, Islam materializes religion and brings it down to the level it attained in the Old Testament, that is to say, the level of temporal reality. The greatest concern of the Jewish people was to extend their frontiers. Islam came back to that, to the idea of holy wars, to a kind of identification between the religious world and the political world, between the City of God and temporal society. This is an appalling obstacle, because it means that when a Moslem frees himself from his religion, he is also set free from his society. He who abjures Islam is by that very fact a traitor to society and a traitor to country; and whoever put him to death would consider such action pleasing to God, for the victim would be looked upon as a renegade. We can well see that any young man or young woman of Islam who was converted to Christianity would become a complete outcast from his society and his world. Conversion under such circumstances is a sacrifice almost beyond human strength. This is indeed a terrible obstacle.

A similar obstacle existed during the first centuries of the Christian era, since Roman civilization was also a civilization in which religion was bound up with society. At that period, this fact found expression, as we all know, in the martyrdom of Christians. Why did the Roman emperors persecute the Christians? It was not for metaphysical reasons, but because religion was identified with the state and was one with it. Consequently, he who turned away from the state religion became a stranger to society. From one point of view, this placed society in danger of disintegration. Certain modern paganisms take the same attitude. They view religion as a disintegrating element, and would syphon off all religious energies for the benefit of political causes.

Such an obstacle exists in Islam. Another obstacle lies in Islam's moral compromise. Islam exemplifies the paradox of a religion whose religious exigencies are very great, but whose moral exigencies are somewhat relaxed. This is a comfortable attitude because it permits the satisfaction of religious needs in a way of life that is far from onerous. There are many people who would be very happy to get out of it thus easily, and Islam has seductive power over them. There are very few souls which have no religious aspirations, but there are many which have not the strength to follow through their aspirations within Christianity, because of the integrity of Christian morality. Many souls love Christ, but have not the strength to go to Him because of the demands Christianity makes. Islam makes its demand too, for as Father Charles, a Syrian missionary, has said somewhere, a religion that does not require certain efforts and sacrifices would not take hold. But Islam also finds much complicity in carnal man.

Let us come back to the Orient. What obstacles do we find in India or China? We were saying that India does not believe in the reality of the visible world. For her, the only reality is the invisible world. The body is an illusion and in a certain degree evil. Therefore, the Incarnation becomes practically unthinkable. If God is conceived of as the principle opposed to matter and not, as in the authentic Christian perspective, the Creator of all things; if one starts from this dualism between spirit and matter, which is at the heart of the Hindu mentality, then the Incarnation becomes inconceivable. Then the idea of a God made man, of a God Who descends, of a God Who loves what is beneath Him is practically unthinkable, because it appears to be the fall of God.

It is curious that this is one of the points that the highest philosophies—in particular Hinduism, and also to a degree

Greek Neoplatonism—have found hardest to understand: that God should descend, and in so doing not fall.¹ You all recall the words of Saint John: *Deus caritas est*. This is the very essence of Christian revelation, infinitely surpassing anything that the human spirit could discover for itself. I am thoroughly convinced that the Hindu position on this matter is the position of man left to his own resources and reduced to his own lights, God representing the world above, and human action being an effort to rise towards Him. But the idea of a God Who comes to seek men and take them up to Him, this Christianity has taught us.

In order to understand this, Hinduism would have to free itself—and this is what is so difficult—from a portion of the attitude of mind that so profoundly colours it. A crisis would be needed, for Hinduism will be converted not by winning a few individuals away from it, but by an evolution within the culture itself. Thus, men will be needed who can enter its mentality in order to transform it from within, to prove that it is unsatisfactory, that it cannot hold up, that it must be left behind, and thereby open the way to Christianity.

At bottom what keeps India away from Christ is pride. It is the refusal to recognize its insufficiency. The great idea of the Hindus is that they possess wisdom and that they alone control the wellsprings from which it flows. All else is avatar. Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha are merely manifestations of a single message, but it is India that possesses this message in its purity and in its completeness. At bottom, Hinduism holds that there is but one wisdom and that there is no Revelation.

¹ On this subject see: Nygren, Anders: *Eros and Agape, a Study of the Christian Idea of Love*, trans. by A. G. Hebert, 1932. Also Scheler, Max Ferdinand, *L'Homme du Ressentiment*, French translation, Gallimard 1942.

Hinduism must die to this pride, just as the Jews needed to die to their pride, that is, to renounce themselves. And obviously such collective renouncement is most difficult. The pride of the Brahmins astonishes those who go to India. It is what makes the Brahmins so fascinating and at the same time so reserved, so hermetically sealed within themselves. Now, only humility opens the way to Christ. In consequence, as long as this recognition of insufficiency is absent, Christ cannot enter into a soul or into a world. The day that India raises its arms to the Liberator it will be able to open itself up to Him. But until such time, its enormous riches are corrupted. India's riches are immense, but they are sealed by pride, because they do not open out upon the true Light.

Thus, there is corruption in Buddhism, in Hinduism, in Islam. When we read the lives or the writings of the best among the Hindus—Rama Krishna, for example—or when we read the Koran, we notice, by the side of admirable insights, sudden puerilities which bear witness to something not altogether right or altogether pure. It is Satan's irony mocking those whom he has been able to dupe. This is what these peoples must cast off if they would come to Christ.

Our conclusion, then, is that a full-fledged missionary spirituality must not see only the evil in other civilizations, nor be so unduly optimistic as to see only the good. It must be at once a spirituality of incarnation and a spirituality of redemption.

1. A spirituality of incarnation, first, in the sense that the first task is evidently to make Christianity incarnate in all that is good in these worlds—in the thought of India, in the thought of China, in the thought of the African Negroes, just as it became incarnate in the Greek

and Roman worlds. This is a vital aspect of our missionary task. We must understand these lands, espouse their cultures, and we cannot do this without genuine sympathy. That is why it is so important for missionary movements to keep in close contact with those who are studying and who understand these worlds.

2. A spirituality of redemption. Our missionary mentality must not be naïve. It must be realized that it is not solely by enlarging their scope that these souls will be brought to Christ, but also by renouncing themselves, by loving truth enough to recognize their own limitations and make an act of humility and of appeal to God, Who alone can bring us to Christ; and in consequence by confessing their faults and expiating them.

What we must do in place of these souls that are not yet doing it, is to purify ourselves for those who are not purifying themselves, to offer ourselves up in expiation for their sins. This is what Christ did for us, and He asks us to do it for others. After all, to understand Christ's teaching means to do for others what Christ first did for us. It means to know how to enter the fight that Anthony fought in the desert, that is, the spiritual fight, the combat of prayer, vigils and fasts, by means of which we can tear souls away from evil. If our missionary spirituality did not have this interior aspect, at once redemptive and expiatory, it would obviously be illusory, incomplete, superficial. It would not go to the heart of things.

CHAPTER IV

INCARNATION AND TRANSFIGURATION

THE REFLECTIONS of this chapter will centre upon the theme of the Incarnation. It is important to speak of this, because the word "Incarnation" is one that we often use. We say that we must have an "incarnate" Christianity, that we do not make it incarnate enough, and that we react against a discarnate Christianity. Now, there are several points here to be clarified, for there must be no doubt as to what we mean, and the true meaning of "Incarnation" can be distorted in several ways if we do not watch.

Often, when we speak of making our Christianity incarnate, we stress that it must not remain sealed up, closed, wholly inward, that it must come into contact with the realities of the world and not remain apart from the society in which we live. If we went no further than that, we would be in real danger of misunderstanding the inward and mystical aspects of Christianity, and treating its efficient action upon civilization as primary.

We sometimes reproach Christianity for not being effective enough, for not bringing about enough change in the world about us, and therefore for being inferior to other systems we see at work in the world. This criticism is valid. Beyond question, Christianity must become incarnate in the sense that it must penetrate the real world in which we live, and that we must be concerned with its temporal efficacy.

At the same time, we must not forget that this is merely the first step, that we must turn towards the world only

in order to turn the world towards Christ, and that the Incarnation is the first stage of a process that is to reach fulfilment in the Transfiguration, that is, in the penetration of the world by the light of Christ. If we tarry too long on the first stage, the process will remain incomplete. In Christ, we find both movements. He became man, and fully man, but in order to make us gods. Without the second part, the first would make no sense whatever.

Therefore, a spirituality of Incarnation is complete only if the Incarnation is the way to the Transfiguration, to deification.¹ There are also certain missionary implications of the question which are quite obvious, for the problem of the Incarnation has a very special bearing on the matter of Missions.

First of all, let us state that Christ was completely a man. He experienced all our emotions. He burned with wrath against the traders in the temple. Let us not imagine that He pretended to be angry. When He was angry, He was genuinely angry, that is to say, His emotions were stirred. Likewise, when Our Lord loved, He did not make believe He loved; He truly loved those who were dear to Him. In this regard, we are often Docetists, to use the name of a heresy of the early Christian era which held that Our Lord pretended to be a man, that He took on the appearances of a man, but that His humanity was at bottom only an appearance, a mask, and that He remained a stranger to human nature. But, as the Fathers of the Church used to say, Our Lord was able to transform only that which He assumed. The Incarnation would not be real and humanity would not have been saved and transformed by grace, if Christ had not truly assumed human nature. If

¹ Analogous views are to be found in a book by the Rev. Henri de Lubac, entitled *Paradoxes*, Paris, Editions du Livre Français, 1946, 123 pp.

there were only the appearances of an Incarnation, then there would be only the appearances of salvation.

Therefore, Our Lord must certainly have experienced these emotions. We see Him in violent anger against the traders in the temple, against the Pharisees whom He calls a "generation of vipers."¹ Mauriac emphasized that aspect of Christ's personality in his *Life of Jesus*;² he emphasized only that aspect, and that is one of the limitations of his book. But he was right in emphasizing it. Again, when Our Lord speaks of those who scandalize children, we sense a real vibration of His emotions, a profound indignation. Our Lord was sensitive to sorrow. When He heard of the death of Lazarus, the Gospel tells us that He "groaned", a strange word that indicates a deeply troubled sensibility. Our Lord had pity: *Misereor super turbam!* When He saw throngs that were hungry, He had real pity for them. His heart was truly stirred. He felt genuine affection. Naturally, He loved His Mother deeply. He had friends, and in particular His true friends of Bethany, Mary, Martha and Lazarus, among whom He sought repose.

Our Lord was more human than we, I would even say more human than we can hope to be. At times we are forced to harden ourselves against certain emotions, but that is because we are vulnerable. We must, for instance, harden ourselves against certain friendships, or fight off righteous anger, because in us righteous anger too easily degenerates into anger that is not righteous. Our emotions get so easily out of control that we must hold them in check. We are obliged to rein them in, not because they are evil but because they are not well balanced, and they

¹ *Matthew*, XXIII, 33.

² Mauriac, François, *Life of Jesus*, translated by Julie Kernan, Longmans Green, 1937, 261 pp.

easily get out of bounds. The desire to hold our emotions in check sometimes leads us into the error of considering sensibility as such as evil, and of imagining that its systematic curbing is a form of perfection. Now, we may often be reduced to such measures in order to regain equilibrium and thereby permit our sensibility to function without detriment to our souls. But this is only a last resort.

In this connection, it might be pointed out that old saints are ordinarily more gracious than young ones, because the latter are still struggling against their imperious and tumultuous natures. These young saints often practice austerities so severe as to frighten us, for they are aware of the danger existing within themselves. For instance, they suppress all aesthetic pleasure because they realize how fragile they are, and fear aesthetic pleasures might fill them with a certain paganism that would lead them away from God. On the other hand, when their emotions are thoroughly purified, far from separating them from God, they are means of leading them to Him, as is the normal function of every creature.

That is why Saint Francis of Assisi sang the "Canticle of the Sun": the sun led him to God. But let us not forget that Saint Francis of Assisi had received the stigmata on Mount Alverna shortly before. We must not sing the Canticle of the Sun too soon. That would be incarnation in the evil sense of the word. It would be believing too readily that we are strong enough to make all creatures lead us to God. Such a thing is possible only when we have first re-established an equilibrium within ourselves through purifications, mortifications, and asceticism; but this asceticism, these mortifications and purifications are not an end in themselves, they are a way of redressing the balance of our perverted beings and of permitting them to come to true flowering in grace. Our Lord, in Whom there was no

element perverted, since He, like the Blessed Virgin, was wholly free from original sin, could give full freedom to His sensibilities without their being in the slightest degree objectionable to God. That is why we can say that, far from being less human than we, He was able to be and actually was more human.

I shall stress another aspect of this Incarnation which is of special concern to us here: namely, that Our Lord was unqualifiedly of His country and of His time. He was the little Galilean child Who went to the synagogue to listen to the Bible, Who was delighted when He heard the reading of Isaiah and when He listened to the scribes explaining all its beauties, because, as He was later to say: "Whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do: but according to their works do ye not."¹ It was permissible to listen to what they said. Their sin lay not in their words. They were excellent exegetes; but unfortunately they did not live comformably with their exegesis.

Christ loved the liturgy of His country, the magnificent temple ritual. Aristeeas, a writer of the third century before Christ, tells in a letter how dazzled he was at the sight of the high priest Eleazar advancing in his splendid vestments on the day of the Pasch. We can scarcely imagine the display on the great Jewish feast days, unfurled under a blazing sun, amidst gold, and marble and perfumes. It was a truly wondrous spectacle. Our Lord liked to pray in the temple.

Thus, Our Lord was profoundly attached to His country, to His people's customs. In consequence, He suffered to think that the temple would be destroyed, that this life of Judaism would be annihilated. He wept over Jerusalem. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . if thou also hadst known the things that are to thy peace!" Let us not suppose that

¹ *Matthew*, XXIII, 3.

Our Lord accepted with joy in His heart that this whole world should be destroyed. Just as He suffered anguish at the thought of His own death although His own death was the condition of His Resurrection, likewise, He suffered anguish at the thought of the destruction of His own country, even though this destruction was the condition for the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

It is indeed true that Judaism had to be abolished as such, so that all nations might enter into Christianity. But here again we must not picture Our Lord as being inhuman, or think for an instant that He rejected without suffering all that had once been the glory of His people. He suffered with the men who persecuted Him, with the Pharisees who refused to open their hearts and minds to His teaching. He knew why His message was difficult for them. They refused to make a sacrifice that was the condition of greater fruition.

Thus, we see that Our Lord really assumed our humanity. But the humanity that He assumed was a fallen humanity. At the end of Mass we recite these words of Saint John: "*Et Verbum caro factum est*—And the Word was made flesh." We must note that this word "flesh," "*sarx*" in Greek, does not mean body. In Greek, body is "*sôma*." "Flesh" means humanity with all its limitations, its deficiencies, and its miseries. And if Saint John uses this word, it is in order to show that the humanity Christ chose to assume was a fallen humanity. Here the flesh is contrasted with the glorious humanity Christ was to assume later on. Christ had a right to this glorious humanity because He is without sin. What is known as the *kenosis*, that is, the annihilation of Our Lord, is the fact that He wanted His humanity to be deprived of the privileges that were His by right.

Now we are at the heart of our problem. Christ assumed fallen humanity in order to transfigure it at the Resurrection. He wished to take on the limitations of humanity, not in the least because these limitations had any value in themselves, but on the contrary in order to free humanity from its limitations and to transfigure it by permeating it with His own divine life. Christ assumed flesh, that is to say, He took on a humanity exactly like our own. As Saint Paul says, He assumed all of our attributes "*absque peccato*—except sin." As a result, He was made subject to all the limitations and all the miseries that characterize our human nature.

We know, for example, that He had a body sensitive, exactly like our own, to pain, fatigue, thirst, and sleep. Nothing could be falser than to imagine Christ's humanity as exempt from all these miseries, or to make of Christ a kind of superman. Christ was not a superman in the sense that the moderns use the word—to indicate a type of humanity representing an extraordinary evolution of the human species in terms of physical power or exceptional resistance to suffering.

We know that Christ was *vulnerable*—and this word is very important. He was sensitive to bodily pain, sensitive to the heart's suffering. This is one of the aspects of Christ's personality that the moderns cannot understand. I am thinking now particularly of the school of Nietzsche, of Nazism which derives from it to some extent, and also of such writers among the French as Henry de Montherlant. Of all the mysteries surrounding Christ, the most incomprehensible to them is the mystery of the agony, that is, of Christ's depression in the face of death; because for them, the hero is the one who affronts death without flinching and without anguish. Christ was in this respect more human than the ideal of manhood we sometimes set up for

ourselves. He believed that human greatness did not consist in hardening oneself against suffering. This is a truth we should never tire of meditating.

Human greatness does not consist in being insensible to one's own suffering or to that of others, or in being without pity. Nothing is farther removed from Christ and from Christianity than the hardness of heart that is sometimes preached to us. Therein lies no greatness. Greatness, in the eyes of Christ and of the Christian, lies in accepting suffering through love, while being fully sensitive to it. The second aspect of Christian greatness is reliance not on one's own strength but on the power of God, with the assurance that God will not permit us to suffer or to be tempted beyond our strength. That is why those heroes who represent a humanity straining in a superhuman effort to outdo itself seem far removed from us when we are subjected to temptation, whereas Christ is always close to us because He has experienced all our anguish.

In this connection, we may note that the goal of non-Christian asceticisms is liberation from sensibility; and this has a direct bearing on the question of the Incarnation. All of these systems, including Stoic and Hindu asceticism, start from an opposition between body and spirit. Now, this is not the Christian point of view. The Christian sees the opposition as between a balanced, transfigured humanity and a fallen humanity. He seeks to restore the complete man—the complete man, body and soul. It is this complete manhood that Christ assumed and that must be saved. Therefore, the body, the sensibilities, are seen as creatures coming from the hands of God, creatures that are good but a little dangerous, and to be handled with caution: but this is necessary because of the unbalance within them and not because of any intrinsic evil.

The wonderful thing about Christian saints is that they are not beings of exceptional human stamp. They are fragile children. Consider Saint Thérèse of Lisieux and how many others! They are of the same human clay as we, but they have greater trust in God. Relying on Him and not on themselves, they are capable of facing all the difficulties on the path to sainthood. Here again the emphasis is on not relying on one's self. This is what gives Christian saintliness the exquisite cachet which it alone possesses: humility. Only Christian saintliness is humble, because the Christian saint does great things knowing that he is good for nothing, whereas the Stoic and the Hindu are too well aware that they are capable of doing difficult things, and they take full credit for their acts of heroism.

There is a non-Christian heroism, but there is no non-Christian saintliness. There must be no confusion of values. There are no saints outside of Christianity, for saintliness is essentially a gift of God, a participation in His life, whereas heroism is on the human level. On the other hand, in all saintliness there must be a portion of heroism, because will-power and character always play a part, provided, of course, they are penetrated with grace and humility.

What conclusion shall we draw from all this, from the missionary point of view? Just as Christ, in assuming human flesh, took on a particular form of humanity with all the limitations this entailed in space and time, just as He became a Jew of His period and of His country, likewise in the course of its development, Christianity continues to become incarnate in the successive civilizations and peoples that it encounters. That is why, immediately after the death of Christ, we see Jewish Apostles, a Paul and a Barnabas, going out to the pagans, casting off their Judaism, striving to think like Greeks and to express the

Gospel in terms that could touch the souls of Greeks. Saint Paul speaks of the "conscience" as the Stoic philosopher might have spoken, and he explains that Christianity is a "mystery," because that was the name then given to the pagan cult. He seeks to make the universal message of the Gospel incarnate in that particular civilization.

This is of concern to the missionary from two points of view: The first is the need of genuine sympathy, of true cordiality towards the human values he encounters. It is the missionary's duty truly to love the peoples whom he is to serve, and to be able to view with benevolence customs, ways of thinking, forms of art that might at first seem strange to him, and even most disconcerting.

It has been the error of certain missionaries to want to take their civilizations along with them, and to impose on the peoples they were to evangelize their own way of seeing, their own artistic style. They may, for example, have wanted to erect Gothic cathedrals in China or force African Negroes to think according to Aristotle's categories. No, that is not it at all! People must be taken as they are, and diverse types of mental structure must be allowed for. It is good, it is normal, that Christianity should become incarnate in these structures.

Latin, for instance, poses a serious problem. We of the Western world don't know very much Latin, but at least it awakens certain echoes in our memories. But for an African Negro or a Chinese, imagine what it must mean to learn Latin! To use the vernacular wherever the Holy See allows will make the practice of the Faith easier to non-European peoples. There is a perfectly legitimate adaptation to make, and it must be made in the most cordial manner. I insist on this word "cordial." One may prefer Gothic art to that of the pagodas, but the style of the pagodas represents a certain artistic ideal; one must be

capable at least of understanding its beauty. As for the art of the African Negro, it has been turned into a popular fad. It must, then, possess certain resources which can be put to use, and it is wholly normal that missionaries should accept it.

Secondly, it must be added that this incarnation also involves renunciation and limitation. For Our Lord, assuming human nature did not consist only in taking on the greatest possible number of human attributes. (Viewed in that light, we would seem to be enriched if we became Chinese or African Negroes.) It also meant humiliating Himself, and taking on the form of a slave: "*Exinavit semetipsum*—He emptied Himself."¹ Our Lord did not cast off His divinity, but only the privileges attached to His divinity: He chose to take on the humanity of a certain epoch and at a specific time, with the limitations this entailed. Nothing could be further from the truth than to picture Him as concerning Himself with all the sciences and all the arts. The very idea is ridiculous. Our Lord's humanity was that of a man of the people in a land of inferior culture. The Greeks despised the Jews profoundly; and, in fact, they were at that period far more cultured than the Jews. Now, Jesus wanted to be one of these despised Jews.

Therefore, he who desires to carry on Christ's work must undergo a far-reaching dispossession; he must renounce all the riches of his own culture, of his own civilization, and live in a milieu whose customs may often be strange and hard for him to accept. Without this self-annihilation the incarnation of the missionary would not follow in the footsteps of Christ.

The Incarnation of Our Lord must be continued in the Church if She is to be a missionary and speak to all nations.

¹ *Philippians*, II, 7.

But this is only a first step. The "katabasis," as the Greeks used to say, or the descent of Christ, the *descensio*, the annihilation by which He assumed the form of a slave when He came to us, is but the first step of a movement that must culminate in the "anabasis," the *ascensio*, by which the humanity that Christ assumed is transfigured. After He has drawn humanity up from its misery, He transforms it by the Divine life that is in Him, and thereby liberates it from its miseries—from mortality, ignorance, and servitude—making it the glorious humanity which is His goal. Thus, the Incarnation is seen to be not an end, but the means for the glorification and salvation of humanity.

This is made very clear in Christ's own life. The mystery of the Incarnation and of the Passion is consummated in the mystery of the Resurrection and the Ascension. That is to say, Our Lord assumed humanity in order to penetrate it with divine life. Just as we have insisted on the truth of Christ's humanity, likewise we must insist on the truth of His divinity. Just as it would be an error to misjudge Christ's humanity and to think He merely pretended to be a man, it would be equally wrong to misjudge His divinity and to look upon Him purely and simply as a great human figure.

I shall not go into all the passages of the Gospel that manifest Christ's divinity, but a few passages are especially important in this connection. I am thinking of Christ's baptism, which was really an Epiphany of His divinity inasmuch as the Father recognized Him as His Son through a voice coming from heaven and through the Holy Ghost's resting on Him. The early Christians well understood this manifestation of Christ's divinity. They made Christ's baptism the prototype of Christian baptism, signifying their deification. I am also thinking of the feast of the

Transfiguration, so dear to Orthodox Christians, in which Christ's glory was so dazzling.

Since we are talking about the Transfiguration and about the devotion Orthodox Christians have for this feast, I might remark that this glorious aspect of Christ is very dear to the Orientals for whom Christ is the Kyrios, the Lord of glory. Their piety is focused altogether on the glorious mysteries and on a participation in the celestial liturgy that Christ continues eternally in Heaven, *semper interpellans pro nobis*. This is of interest with respect to the contact of Western Christians with Orientals and Russians. We sometimes shock them by the way we unduly humanize Christ, as if He were no more than a noble human ideal.

What we call Christian values, Christian civilization, and the ideal of the Gospel, often correspond to a primarily human and moral point of view. We are inclined to disregard what there is of mystery in Christ and the presence of God in Him, with all that this involves in the way of adoration, cult and liturgy. It is possible to err in this direction. Such a conception of Christ has been held by many intellectual rationalists since Renan, and by Protestant liberals like Harnack. Guignebert's *Jésus*¹ is characteristic of this tendency to bring Christ down to the proportions of a great Prophet, on a level with Buddha and Mohammed.

Such a point of view comes close to that of the Hinduists and in general of the syncretists, who see in Christ a great personage—perhaps the greatest—but still one among other personages of the same order. This gives them the appearance of respecting Jesus. Indeed, today many men speak of Christ, of the admiration they have for Him, of the

¹ Charles A. H. Guignebert, *Jésus*, Paris, La Renaissance du Livre, 1933, 692 pp.

reverence in which they hold Him; but the Christ they speak of is only the One Who preached the first part of the Sermon on the Mount, and not the One Who rose from the dead.

That amounts to recognizing only Christ as He lived on earth and disregarding Christ as head of the Mystical Body. In consequence, it means forgetting Christ's primary achievement, which consists in having divinized humanity and thereby having introduced it into the mystery of God. That amounts to suppressing all the transcendence, all the supernatural, all the mystery in Christianity. Karl Adam, in his book *Christ Our Brother*,¹ calls this "jesuanism," that is, a distortion that suppresses Christ the Lord, and stresses only the human character of Jesus; that sees in Him only a Prophet, "the most illustrious of the dead of the past," but not "the most living of our contemporaries"; a master of wisdom who lived in Galilee twenty centuries ago and who preached the most beautiful of all messages, but not the Christ of "yesterday, and today, and the same forever,"² as Saint Paul says: in other words, not the "living Christ" Who is our king today, and with Whom we commune through the sacraments, through prayer, and through the Church.

Now, the purpose of the Incarnation is to bring about, by reason of the union of divinity and humanity in Christ's person, the transfiguration of our nature, through which we are made participants in the divine life and liberated from what Saint Bernard calls its *misericordia*, that is, not only sin but also all the consequences of sin, all that is wretched in our present being, all limitations such as death, sickness, suffering, vagaries, perversions, unbalance. Christ is even

¹ Karl Adam, *Christ Our Brother*, trans. by Dom Justin McCann, O.S.B., New York, Macmillan Co., 1931, 210 pp.

² *Hebrews*, XIII, 8.

at this moment bringing this transformation about in humanity.

Now, as we have said, a Christian must be fully incarnated in his country, his time; and the missionary must become an African Negro among African Negroes, a Hindu among Hindus, just as Saint Paul was a Jew among Jews, and a Greek among Greeks. However, at the same time, a Christian, because Christ is already acting through him, is emancipated from all these limitations and, while he continues to belong to a certain epoch and to a certain country, he is a man of every epoch and of every country. He is a Catholic, that is, his humanity reaches out beyond all particularisms because he already belongs to a humanity glorified in Christ, and this transfigured humanity transcends all frontiers.

The paradox of the Christian's position in the world often proves to be this twofold aspect of incarnation and transfiguration: he is at once an incarnate being and a transfigured being. While a Frenchman must be French to the tips of his fingers and have the reactions normal to Frenchmen—and if he didn't his incarnation would be diminished—he must, if he is a Catholic, also be universal, and embrace all men in his love.

Bergson used to say that the fraternity of all men is a wholly religious reality. This universal fraternity exists because Christ's humanity is permeated with divine life. The paradox of our existence is that we also belong to a particular country, that we are at once limited beings and universal beings. This was the drama of Christ Himself, Who was unreservedly a Jew and yet Who died for all men. Indeed, He was obliged to sacrifice—not without suffering—His attachment to His past in order to accomplish His mission. We too shall at times be obliged to make such sacrifices. This is especially true of a missionary

who leaves his native land. He would be remiss were he not to suffer.

This transfiguration is already becoming a reality, and the humanity to which we belong in Christ is already entering its glory through the life of the sacraments, which makes us divine even now, transforms our hearts by enlarging their capacity to the measure of Christ's, transfigures our very bodies by beginning to free them of their bondage, by making them capable, in poverty, in chastity, in charity, of a purity, of an integrity that are beyond the strength of men. And all these things are the result of the action in us of the glorious Christ, Who releases us from our frailty. Naturally, this will be accomplished in its plenitude only in glory, when we shall be completely united to the life of Christ.

Let us relate this second aspect to the life of the missionary. We stated earlier that Christianity must become incarnate among different civilizations and different cultures. In the same way, it must transfigure them, and it is in order to transfigure them that it must become incarnate in them. It sets up no absolutes: it is aware of their limitations, and if it none the less adopts them out of love, it does so with open eyes and without any foolish idealization. From this point of view the missionary's position is hazardous and delicate, for he must be unusually discerning to distinguish the tares from the good grain, to disentangle what is good in a civilization and can be adopted, from what is perverted and must be rejected.

This is a danger even for us who would study Buddhism or Communism or Islamism. Ours must be incorruptible souls to be able to traffic with them without being contaminated. And indeed it is the attribute of a very pure soul that it can retain all that is good and throw off all that is evil in the things it touches. This requires exquisite

tact and "the mind of Christ," as Saint Paul says: *sensum Christi habemus*.¹ Then, once we are truly filled with Christ, we can go anywhere without being contaminated. Christ can associate with anybody at all; we, as yet, cannot do so, for too often others would leave their imprint upon us. Here lies the mystery as well as the danger of the apostolate and of all missionary activity.

Our vocation is to go out among others; we must not retire within our shell. We must become one of them, but we must without question avoid being contaminated by our contact with them. All is lost if, when we go out among them, we become like them, instead of their becoming like us. In such cases, there is an incarnation; but without a transfiguration it is worthless. That is why the Incarnation can be equivocal. It has value only insofar as it is consummated in the Transfiguration, and insofar as, when we go out among others, we know exactly how to help them extirpate what in them is evil and cannot be transfigured, meanwhile preserving everything that can be saved. Missionary action consists in discerning all that is good in civilizations and cultures, so as to permeate them with Christianity and offer them up to Christ; meanwhile discerning all that is false, so that it may be eliminated and rejected.

¹ 1 Corinthians, II, 16.

CHAPTER V

MISSION AND SECOND COMING

IN THIS chapter I shall attempt to place the missionary problem within the framework of a Christian view of history. In our time, more and more problems are thought out in terms of historical perspective. Having a longer range of vision and more extensive scientific knowledge than did men of a century ago, we can delve into the past of the earth far more deeply than they could. We now know the history of primitive humanity and even the pre-history of man. The most remote past of the world takes shape for present-day minds. Furthermore, now that human history has been more fully unfolded, we can better distinguish its periods and developments. These views have a strong bearing on our over-all conception of the world.

The great difference between the seventeenth century and the present is that the men of the seventeenth century viewed everything in terms of the individual. For the men of that time, the great problem was that of grace and of liberty: Shall I be saved? How shall I be saved? What is the role of liberty and what of grace in my personal salvation? Now, this perspective no longer satisfies our contemporaries. They are concerned far less with individual salvation than with the salvation of the world, the development of the Mystical Body and the fulfilment of God's plan by the whole human race.

This historical point of view characterizes the great ideas of the world in which we live. We can cite, as two examples of this, Marxist thought and Nietzschean thought.

The Marxists conceive of history as a development through which man progressively transforms himself by transforming the material conditions of his life. That is perhaps the most concise definition we can give of Marxist thought. Here indeed we find the idea of transforming man, but depending entirely upon the transformation of material conditions. By material means, man is to attain a certain liberation with respect to the cosmic forces or the social forces that overwhelm him, and thus achieve a kind of earthly paradise. And, at the utmost, he may even hold off death. Friedmann, in a book entitled *La Crise du Progrès*,¹ visualizes as the goal of science, if not the abolition of death at least the extension of the dimensions of human life. This perspective is not without grandeur, but in some respects it is unsatisfying, because there is little cause for exaltation in the prospect of indefinitely prolonging existence under present conditions. What we long for is life. No one wants to die. But to prolong without end a life in which we know nothing better can happen, that is literally hell, and has nothing in common with the Christian ideal of eternal life.

The Germanic conception, expressed in Spengler's *Decline of the West*, is somewhat different. Spengler conceives of history as a succession of great civilizations which, like biological realities, have a beginning, a zenith, and come to a catastrophic close. Then, other civilizations appear, without any continuity or anything that may properly be called progress. There once existed an Assyrian civilization of which we know little, then an Egyptian civilization, and later a Greek civilization. After each of these civilizations there was a catastrophe, a Middle Age, when a great portion of the progress previously attained was lost. In the eyes of this author we have

¹ Georges Friedmann, *La Crise du Progrès*, Paris, Gallimard, 1936, 284 pp.

reached the decline of the West, we shall soon enter another Middle Age, and afterward there will be another civilization, a new world which we cannot even conceive.¹

These examples—we might cite others, such as Bergson's concept—show us how worth while it is for us to think out our Christianity in historic perspective.² It is evident that it is here that Christianity comes closest to satisfying the exigencies of contemporary minds. As Father de Montcheuil used to say, Christianity need not adapt itself to successive philosophies, but it must take into account the spiritual experiences from which these philosophies are born. This is very true. For example, we need not at all adapt ourselves to Marxism, but we must take into account the spiritual experience from which Marxism was born. And precisely because we believe that our Christianity must be the true answer to this spiritual experience, we must present it in a form that can satisfy those exigencies. Hence, our interest in Christianity as a religion that takes history into account, and, more specifically, our interest in the precise place of missionary thought and missionary action in the Christian historic perspective.

The remarkable thing is that not only is Christianity a religion that gives history its due, but it is the only religion that conceives things historically in the strict sense of the word, in that Christianity is the only religion that grasps the meaning of history. The other religions, for the most part, view time, the order of reality in which history unfolds, as a degradation with respect to eternity, which

¹ Translator's note: Spengler intimated that Russia might be a new and budding civilization. See: *The Decline of the West*, Alfred A. Knopf, 1932, 1 vol. edition.

² Efforts in this direction include Henri de Lubac's *Catholicisme*, Ed. du Cerf; Christopher Dawson's *Progress and Religion*, London, Sheed & Ward, 1929, 254 pp. Jean Daniélou's *Le Signe du Temple*, Gallimard.

they hold to be the only genuine reality; they consider being, in the full sense of the word, as exempt from change, progress, and evolution. For them, time is nothing but a mirror, a degraded reflection of eternity. We find this very marked in Platonic thought and in all that derives from it. It is also very characteristic of Hindu thought. For Hinduism, and even more for Buddhism, time represents multiplicity, division, dispersion, whereas what truly exists is unity.

The purpose of Buddhist asceticism is to escape from time, from multiplicity, in order to achieve interior unity, which is held to be divine. The Buddhist believes that when he has completed his initiation he has already become immortal, that he has conquered time, that he has been liberated from it, and that he is plunging into the eternity of Being. This is true at least of primitive Buddhism, and in general of the forms of Buddhism that lay greatest stress on asceticism.

In addition, a mythology has been developed that is called Buddhology and looks upon Buddha not only as a master of wisdom but as a metaphysical reality, a supreme Being in whose life we are to participate. This Buddhology, which is most highly developed in the branch of Buddhism called Amidism, is prevalent in Japan. It is to be distinguished from the Buddhism of Tibet, which is more ascetic in character. Buddhology has a certain conception of history: it holds that there is a series of successive Buddhas who are, as it were, so many Messiahs, bringing humanity little by little toward an increasingly happy destiny. Buddha is considered to be one of these apparitions, and Amida another; and still another figure is awaited in future times who will be a new incarnation of Buddha and who will bring new progress. Here too is a certain historical vision.

Elsewhere, in several other religions—I am thinking particularly of the ancient religions of Persia—we find a different conception of history. These religions conceive of time as having direction. (By direction I mean that it is a reality that develops organically, whereas in Buddhist and Platonic thought time has neither beginning nor end, and one must ever strive to be liberated from it because it is pure absurdity.) They conceive of history as developing over a given period of time, then a catastrophe befalls, a general conflagration: the world is set on fire and is consumed; then everything starts over again, going through the same development and culminating in a second catastrophe. That is the doctrine of eternal renewal. It was adopted by certain Greek philosophers, and more recently by Nietzsche.

This is not an eternization of our life on earth, but a series of successive lives, each exactly alike, in which we would be obliged unendingly to go through everything that we have lived before. The frightful thing about these conceptions of history is the ennui they engender, the lassitude in the face of a cycle that starts over and over indefinitely and from which there is no escape. Now, if there is a fundamental human need, it is that there should be a final outcome, that life should have meaning, and that this meaning should be realized in the end. Even the noblest of these conceptions have not succeeded in reaching such a conclusion, either by escaping from time or by abandoning the world to its unhappy fate. Besides, from the Buddhist viewpoint, one is never certain of being definitely liberated from time, even after having eluded it.

Now, in contrast to these doctrines, the Bible has a totally different perspective. In the Bible, history is the realization of God's plan, having a beginning, a middle, and an end. Within the framework of time and by means

of time, God accomplishes a definite task in successive stages, according to His own plan. This point of view recurs often in the Old Testament: much is said about "the day of Yahweh," or "the day" on which the world will come to an end. Our Lord also makes use of this vocabulary in the Gospel. He uses this mysterious expression: "My hour is not yet come,"¹ or "This is not my hour," or again "This is your hour and the power of darkness."² All this demonstrates the existence of a plan established by God in which everything happens at its appointed hour.

History now takes on consistency and meaning. It ceases to be pure multiplicity and dispersion and becomes a coherent reality, ordered towards an end, a creation of God. Biblical thought gives expression to this view of history from the moment it becomes self-aware, that is, from the time of Abraham, in anticipation of the accomplishment by God of His design. God promised Abraham—and this is the Covenant—that in him all nations would be blessed and that his descendants would possess the land of promise.

Thereafter, the history of Israel is a series of events by which God's plan is accomplished. The promise made to Abraham about 1800 B.C. was accomplished about 1200 B.C., when Joshua entered the promised land and the Jews settled on it. But this first realization did not exhaust the substance of the promise. That is why, throughout Jewish history, there persists the expectation of the definitive coming of the Kingdom of God. That is what the word "eschatology" means. Eschatology is the science, the "logos" of the "eschaton," that is, of the end. Eschatology pervades all of Jewish history, and only Jewish history. This is what is absolutely unique about the Jewish

¹ *John*, II, 4.

² *Luke*, XXII, 53.

people, from the purely ethnological point of view. In fact, one can say that only the Jewish people have a real history.

This expectation inspired the preaching of the Prophets. Toward the time of Christ it had taken on an almost feverish intensity, which was manifest in all the apocalyptic literature of that period in which details of the end of the world were given. These events are to be characterized, first of all, by the great assembling in Jerusalem of all men, Jews first, and then the others, an assembling that necessarily implies the resurrection; because in order for all men to assemble, the dead must rise again. Then the Son of man will come. That is the term used in the Apocalypses and it is the one by which Our Lord always designated Himself. The expression "Son of man" appears seventy times in the Gospels, and each time uttered by Christ, never by any other.

The primary work that the Son of man is to accomplish is what the Apocalypses call judgment, that is, the discernment of the good and the wicked, the annihilation of evil powers and the rewarding of the just. The forces of evil are, first of all, demoniacal powers and then temporal powers, the great empires that one after the other have crushed Israel in the course of history and whose destruction Israel has always been awaiting.

This judgment is to be followed by the establishment of the Kingdom of God, conceived by the Jews of that period under two different aspects. On the one hand, they visualized it as an earthly kingdom, holy and free from all sin, governed by a Messianic king. This would be accompanied by a return of sorts to the conditions of Eden, in that the prosperity and fecundity of the earth would be very great. The other view was that judgment would consist in the annihilation of the existing world and its

supersession by "the new age," a totally different world where all the friends of God would be gathered close to Him in a mysterious and eternal life.

Now, all these eschatological realities, awaited from all time by the Jews, were accomplished by Our Lord. He declared Himself to be the Son of man Whom David foretold. "He that believeth not is already judged" (*John*, III, 18); "he is passed from death to life" (*John*, V, 24); "he hath life everlasting" (*John*, V, 24); "the hour . . . now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and . . . shall live" (*John*, V, 25). All this was brought about through the mysterious events of His Incarnation, His Passion, His Resurrection, and finally His Ascension, by which, according to the Epistle to the Hebrews, humanity was introduced *once and for all* into the sphere of God. I lay stress on the words "once and for all" because they are of capital importance for the Christian philosophy of history.

The Ascension represents an extraordinary event in the history of the world because through it humanity was once and for all eternity united to the life of God and introduced by Christ into the sphere of God: "*Hapax*, once and for all," absolutely "irreversibly," to use an expression currently in favour among philosophers for defining the meaning of time. There can be no turning back, and humanity can never again be separated from God. It has entered into His intimacy definitely and for all eternity. We have been saved in Christ. Therefore, salvation is for us no longer merely a hope; it is a reality we already possess. We possess divine life, and the fulness of time has come with Christ.

Yet, when we consider ourselves and the human beings around us, we are struck by a contrary vision, by all that remains in us of misery and sin, and by the slight difference

there often seems to be between Christians and non-Christians. We are astonished that this salvation acquired through Christ is manifested so little. It was so for the first Christians, too. While they were fully convinced that from the day of Pentecost when the Holy Ghost came down upon them they had divine life, still they were conscious of what they lacked; they realized especially that they were not yet risen again. They could say with Saint Paul, "*Con-surrexistis cum Christo*—In (Christ) also you are risen again."¹ Yet they knew that this resurrection in which we participate through grace is not yet manifest in our bodies. According to Saint John, "We are now the sons of God." "*Nunc*" is analogous to the "*hapax*" we spoke of earlier. "And it hath not yet appeared what we shall be."² Something, then, has been acquired, yet this first acquisition is far from ultimate fulfilment. But we know that at the time of this final manifestation, of this Apocalypse, "we shall be like to him: because we shall see him as he is."³

Thus, the first Christians, although they had realized all that had already been acquired for them, awaited Christ's return from heaven (where He had gone on the Ascension) by an event that they called the *parousia* or *adventus*, the second coming of Christ to gather all the friends of God into the Father's house. "I go to prepare a place for you," Christ says in the Gospel of Saint John. "I will come again, and will take you to myself . . . a little while and you shall not see me, and again a little while, and you shall see me."⁴

We should note that they thought Our Lord meant His return to be imminent: "Amen I say to you, there are some of them that stand here, that shall not taste death

¹ *Colossians*, II, 12.

² *John*, III, 2.

³ *John*, III, 2.

⁴ *John*, XIV, 2-3; XVI, 16.

till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.”¹ There is a sense of urgency in certain of Saint Paul’s Epistles, especially in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians where the Apostle gives a most vivid picture of what will happen when Christ returns: “For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again; even so them who have slept through Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you in the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not go before them who have slept (that is to say, the dead). For (when the signal is given—this is thoroughly biblical language) the Lord himself shall come down from heaven with commandment (that is the Second Coming), and with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God: and the dead who are in Christ shall rise first. Then, we who are alive, who are left, shall be taken up together with them in the clouds to meet Christ, in the air, and so we shall be always with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort ye one another with these words.”²

Do we seem to have wandered far afield from the missionary problem? We are coming back to it. The Lord is to return soon. He will surely return. But there is some delay, “*moram faciente sponso*,” as in the parable of the wise and the foolish virgins. The foolish virgins and the wise virgins lived in expectation, and that is just what the first Christians did: they were awaiting the return of the Bridegroom, Who had gone to celebrate His wedding, the eternal marriage of the Lamb to the Church. As Gregory of Nyssa pictures it, He entered paradise, bringing with Him his bride, Humanity, whom He had just wedded on the Cross. He introduced her into the house of His Father. Then He was to come back for all the members of His mystical body and introduce them into

¹ Matthew, XVI, 28.

² 1 Thessalonians; IV, 13-17.

the joy of His glory. Now, there seems to be some delay. Why? What is going on?

If there is a delay, it is because there is an obstacle in the way, preventing the events of the end of time from coming to pass. In his first Epistle to the Thessalonians, Saint Paul, in answer to questions that had been raised in Thessalonica, seemed to say that the Lord would return soon, and they should go before Him and enter into His glory. As a result, the Thessalonians, taking the Apostle's teaching literally, sat around doing nothing, and were content to await the coming of the Lord. That is the real meaning of the primitive Christian vigils: they wanted to be watching when Christ came. Our Lord had said: You must watch all night, for no one knows if the Master will come at the third, the sixth, or the ninth hour, and the Lord must find the servant watching. The first Christians had taken these words literally and they watched in relays so as not to miss the coming of the Lord.

Evidently, there were certain inconveniences to this procedure, and it could easily upset life's regular routines. So Saint Paul felt obliged to give more specific instructions in his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians: "And we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of our gathering together with him: That you be not easily moved from your sense, nor be terrified, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by epistle, as sent from us, as if the day of the Lord were at hand."¹

Then he repeated what he had said the first time: "Let no man deceive you by any means, for . . . there (will) come a revolt (before the coming of the Lord), and the man of sin (will) be revealed, and the son of perdition, who opposeth, and is lifted up above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that he sitteth in the temple of

¹ 2 *Thessalonians*, II, 1-2.

God, shewing himself as if he were God.”¹ “Son of perdition” is a mysterious term. We do not know whether it is collective or individual. It represents the deification of man by himself. “Remember you not, that when I was yet with you, I told you these things.”² We have no way of knowing what Saint Paul might have told them. “And now (this is the crux of the matter) you know what *withholdeth*, that he may be revealed in his time.”³ There is, then, something that withholds, that stands in the way, that delays. This is a very mysterious passage, and one on which exegetes have written many commentaries. It has been thought that the Roman Empire was what opposed Christ at that time. But that is not a very satisfactory solution, since the obstacle in question is opposed to the coming of anti-Christ, who is to come first.

Light is shed on this text by a passage from Saint Matthew’s eschatological discourse in Chapter XXIV.⁴ (Now we are at the heart of our subject.) Our Lord tells of the happenings of the end of the world, making answer to His Apostles who ask Him: “Tell us when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the consummation of the world?” Christ answers: “Take heed that no man seduce you.”⁵ He indicates that there will be wars between nations, kingdoms against kingdoms, and pestilences. “Now all these are the beginning of sorrows . . . and many false prophets shall rise, and shall seduce many. And because iniquity hath abounded, the charity of many shall grow cold. But he that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved. And this

¹ 2 *Thessalonians*, II, 3-4.

² 2 *Thessalonians*, II, 5.

³ 2 *Thessalonians*, II, 6.

⁴ The following material is in great part derived from O. Cullman’s article on *Le Caractère Eschatologique du Devoir Missionnaire et la Conscience Apostolique de Saint Paul*, *Rev. Hist. Phil. relig.*, 1936, p. 210 ff.

⁵ *Matthew*, XXIV, 3-4.

Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in the whole world, for a testimony to all nations, and then shall the consummation come."¹

This is the vital passage which sheds light on the text from the Epistle to the Thessalonians. In order for the end to come, that is, in order that the Second Coming of the Lord be manifested, and that the Lord return to gather up His own, a certain condition must be fulfilled, and as long as it is not fulfilled, the Lord cannot return in His glory. This condition is that the Gospel be preached to all nations. This sheds great light on the fundamental nature of the mission, of evangelization: it is the great reality of the present-day world, and the essential condition for the accomplishment of the Second Coming, for which all Christians yearn. The first Christians lived in expectation of it, and we, too, must continue to do so. They lived in expectation of Christ's coming in glory to establish His Kingdom for all eternity. That is the ultimate goal of Christian hope, of which we see only the beginnings at the present time. Now, in order that this may come about, in order that our hope may attain its goal, there is only one condition, but it is indispensable: The Gospel must have been preached to all the nations of the world, to the entire universe.

Several other New Testament texts are illuminated in this light, for example, the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles. After the Resurrection, the Apostles ask the Lord: "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel?" That is what preoccupies them. When will the Messianic kingdom be definitively established? And the Lord answers them: "It is not for you to know the times or moments, which the Father hath put in his own power. But you shall receive the power of the Holy

¹ *Matthew*, XXIV, 8-14.

Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth."¹ Thus, the Apostles need not know the time. They need only to know one thing, that they are to carry the word of the Lord to the uttermost part of the earth. Herein lies the totality of Christian life until the Second Coming. The Gospel must be preached to all nations, and then the Lord can establish His Kingdom.

This throws light on another profoundly mysterious text, namely, the celebrated passage of the four horsemen in Chapter VI of the Apocalypse: "And I saw that the Lamb had opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures, as it were the voice of thunder, saying: Come, and see. And I saw: and behold a white horse, and he that sat on him had a bow, and there was a crown given him, and he went forth conquering that he might conquer. And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature, saying: Come, and see. And there went out another horse that was red: and to him that sat thereon, it was given that he should take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another, and a great sword was given to him . . . And behold a black horse, and he that sat on him had a pair of scales in his hand. . . . And behold a pale horse, and he that sat upon him, his name was Death, and hell followed him. And power was given to him over the four parts of the earth, to kill with the sword, with famine, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth."²

These four horses differ considerably from one another: the last three represent the calamities of the end of the world, which Our Lord and Saint Paul tell us will precede the Second Coming. But before these three horses, there

¹ *Acts of the Apostles*, I, 6-8.

² *Apocalypse*, VI, 1-8.

is the white horse who is to go on his triumphant way all over the world. We learn this horse's name in Chapter XIX of the Apocalypse: "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse: and he that sat upon him was called faithful and true, and with justice doth he judge and fight. And his eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many diadems, and he had a name written, which no man knoweth but himself. And he was clothed with a garment sprinkled with blood; and his name is called, THE WORD OF GOD."¹ This white horse, therefore, is the Word of God, it is the Gospel of God that is to make its triumphant way around the world before the happenings of the end can come to pass.

These passages prove to us that Saint Paul, first of all, and the whole body of early Christians afterwards, believed the reason for this delay, this "*mora*"—which astonished them and which they came to understand only by degrees—was the necessity of evangelizing the entire world and of the acceptance of God's message by all nations before the Second Coming. But they thought it would come about much more rapidly. On this point, God's plan was a mystery to them. Saint Paul believed that in a man's lifetime he, the Apostle of the nations, would be able to convert the entire world and thus bring all men together in Christ; and that as the culmination of all this he would see the Lord coming in the clouds to judge all nations. This explains the tragedy of his missionary efforts, the breathless haste which dashed him on all the shores of the world, the fever which consumed him and whose full meaning is clear only when one grasps the eschatological nature of his mission.

After those first days, God's plan unfolded in its mystery by slow degrees. It became evident that this was a work

¹ *Apocalypse*, XIX, 11-13.

that would take great patience, and that the delay would be much longer than had at first been thought; that the gradual entrance of the nations into the Church one after another would take many centuries. There was danger, obviously, that the vigil mentioned above might be relaxed, and that after having waited so many nights Christians might in the end cease to focus the attention of their souls on the Second Coming. To the extent that Christians have relaxed their vigil they have been unfaithful to God's call, for it is characteristic of the Christian economy always to consider the Second Coming as imminent, and to stress the need ever to have our hearts inwardly oriented toward the definitive meeting of all humanity with the Bridegroom. Christianity is also characterized by immense patience, as the Fathers of the Church are ever reminding us, through which we must bear unflinchingly without discouragement, with hope unflagging, all delays, all disappointments, all obstacles, with hope ever burning in our hearts.

This philosophy of history, or rather this theology of history, was clarified by Saint Paul in connection with a very interesting point in the Epistle to the Romans, a point that relates to one of the great Christian mysteries of history, the mystery of Judaism. There can be no doubt that the Jewish problem is fundamentally a theological problem. On this, we are unalterably opposed to racism, which considers it a biological problem. For us, the Jews are not at all inferior biologically, but their race is marked by a mysterious theological destiny. And that is why the Jewish race remains such a problem in the community of nations.

Concerning this mystery of the historic meaning of Judaism and of its relation to eschatology, Saint Paul, in the Epistle to the Romans, expressed himself in a remarkable manner. The Jews rejected the Messiah. That is

indeed strange. This people had lived for centuries in expectation of the Messiah, and when the Messiah did come, they crucified Him. "Have they so stumbled that they should fall?" Saint Paul asks. "God forbid. But by their offence, salvation is come to the Gentiles."¹ These views on history are truly unfathomable.

The apostasy of the Jewish people is in some obscure way within God's plan. Saint Paul does not presuppose the condemnation of the Jews, for this apostasy might have been committed in good faith by practically the entire Jewish people, inasmuch as they did not recognize the Messiah. "Salvation is come to the Gentiles, that they may be emulous of them. Now, if the offence of them be the riches of the world, and the diminution of them, the riches of the Gentiles; how much more the fulness of them?"²

This extraordinary text suggests that the plenitude of the Jewish people's vocation will become manifest only at the end of time. "For I say to you, Gentiles: as long indeed as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I will honour my ministry. If, by any means, I may provoke to emulation them who are my flesh and may save some of them. For if the loss of them be the reconciliation of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?"³ Thus, there is a relationship between the reintegration of the Jews and the resurrection of the dead, that is, the Second Coming, the end of the world. And Saint Paul continues: ". . . blindness in part has happened in Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles should come in. And so all Israel should be saved, as it is written: There shall come out of Sion, he that shall deliver."⁴

Therefore Saint Paul knew that the salvation of Israel, of his brothers whom he loved passionately, was linked

¹ *Romans*, XI, 11.

² *Romans*, XI, 13-15.

³ *Romans*, XI, 11-12.

⁴ *Romans*, XI, 25-26.

to the conversion of the Gentiles. Many consequences flowed from this. Here was a second reason why the conversion of the Gentiles appeared to be so urgent in his eyes: he knew that the Jews would be saved only after the mass of the Gentiles had been gathered in. This was one of the great mysteries of His Revelation that the Lord had made known to him. But, here again, Paul thought this could all be accomplished within the span of a man's life, and that the conversion of the Jews could come to pass during his own lifetime . . .

The conversion of the Jews has remained in abeyance ever since. For what reason? It remains in abeyance because of the missionary question. We know that the Jews will not be converted as a people before the mass of the Gentiles have entered the fold. The obstacle to the conversion of the Jews is precisely the fact that the work of evangelizing is not yet completed. It is only when all the peoples of the world have been collectively evangelized, when India is Christian, when China is Christian, when the African Negro world is Christian, that the Jews can be converted; and once the Jews are reintegrated, as Saint Paul says, then and then only can the resurrection come to pass. This strange passage throws a searching light on the Christian philosophy of history, and it places at the very heart of this mystery the missionary problem, that is, the evangelization of the pagans.

What conclusions are to be drawn from the point of view of missionary spirituality? Saint Paul's conception of history teaches three important lessons.

First, that the evangelization of the pagans, and therefore the mission, are necessary prerequisites of the Second Coming, and that there is a direct relationship between the evangelization of the world and the coming of the Kingdom of God, for which humanity yearns. The Lord will come

to us in His fulness only when the evangelization of the world has been completed. This means that when we die we shall enter into the joy of the Father, to be sure, but our joy will remain incomplete because it will not yet be the resurrection, nor the great assembling. Therefore, for our joy to be complete the obstacle must be removed, that is, all nations must have been evangelized. Thus, the expectation of the Second Coming does not mean at all that we should lose interest in the present world. On the contrary, it should inspire us to great apostolic zeal.

The second lesson is the urgency of preaching. If we truly yearn for the coming of the Kingdom of God, then the preaching of the Gospel, and in particular missionary evangelization, take on a new urgency and appear to be the only efficacious means we have of preparing for the Kingdom of God. That is why Saint Paul stresses this idea with such insistence. I shall cite only one very beautiful text from the Second Epistle to Timothy, which presents several of the ideas we have been discussing. This is a passage which often recurs in the liturgy:

"I charge thee, before God and Jesus Christ, who shall judge the living and the dead, by his coming, and his kingdom . . ." It is clear that Saint Paul is placing himself wholly within the perspective of the Second Coming, which is to include the judgment, the coming of Christ, and the kingdom. "Preach the word." There is a direct link between the two. ". . . Reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine. For there shall be a time when they will not endure sound doctrine; but, according to their desires, they will heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears: And will indeed turn away their hearing from the truth, but will be turned unto fables. But be thou vigilant, labour in all things, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil thy ministry. Be sober. For I am even now

ready to be sacrificed: and the time of my dissolution is at hand. I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord the just judge will render to me *in that day*: and not only to me, but to them also that love his coming."¹

The final words, "*qui diligunt adventum ejus*," provide one of the greatest and most beautiful definitions of a Christian: "He who loves the Second Coming of the Lord," that is, he whose soul is elevated above merely temporal and historical fulfilments in order to await the final meeting between the Bridegroom and the Bride, between Christ and humanity.

There is one last aspect that may seem to contradict the preceding one, but whose union with it, paradoxically, constitutes Christian spirituality: patience. While there is urgency in the matter of preaching, there is also the delay, the "*mora*," of the Bridegroom. We now know why He delays, and we realize better than the first Christians that His coming must still be put off for a little while, until missionary evangelization has been accomplished. It should be remarked that this evangelization might be accomplished more quickly if there were only a little more faith in the world, if Christians were animated by the zeal of Saint Paul. At all events, Christ's coming is not yet, and while we wait we must continue to watch, not becoming discouraged, and above all not losing sight of what we are striving toward. We must not become accustomed to this earth. Our spiritual hopes must not become degraded in an earthly Messianism. Our great temptation is to lose sight of this celestial and perfect fulfilment of the Kingdom of God, and to content ourselves with its feeble image in some form of terrestrial society. For even the best image

¹ 2 Timothy, IV, 1-8.

is but a degraded reflection of what we expect of the true Kingdom of God.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

Orthodox and Protestant Eschatologies

Christians have lost their sense of history. This was particularly true of Russian Orthodoxy, which had lost interest in history. The Orthodox religion had become a religion of monks, an intemporal contemplation expressed through the liturgical life, a life already in the society of the angels. Therefore, the full meaning of the Incarnation, and in particular of evangelization, was lost. Russian Orthodox Christians still maintain a few vigorous missions, but the Orthodox mission is, on the whole, very meagre. There is one mission, notably in Japan, but it is of little importance. Now Russia has once again found her sense of history on the secular level, through Marxism. And by this mysterious course history and eschatology have both been reborn in Russian religious thought. This can be seen in the work of Berdiaev, who contrasts Orthodox Messianism and Occidental conservatism. But this opposition arises chiefly from sociological differences. In modern Russia there is a dynamism and an élan toward the future, whereas among the peoples of the West there is an effort rather to conserve the past.

Among Protestants there has also been a rebirth of eschatology in the Barth school. Eschatology is at the heart of Barth's thought, but this eschatology is quite different from ours, inasmuch as Protestants understand eschatology to be a rupture between the present world and the world of God. They have no idea of historical development. For them, eschatology expresses the tragic situation of man the sinner in the presence of God. The Protestants hold

that we are justified only in hope: not only do we await the resurrection, we are even waiting for grace.

On the other hand, we Catholics hold that it is a question of distinguishing between what is awaited and what is already possessed. We know that we already possess grace, that we are "sons of God," as Saint John says, but that we do not yet possess the resurrection. The element of expectation is even more tragic for the Protestants than for us. The Christian saints, the great mystics, already possess God in a measure. For the Protestants this does not exist. That is why they understand the Old Testament so well, it speaks much more about expectation than does the New Testament. In their eyes, Christ has won their salvation, but they do not yet enjoy it. Luther expresses this attitude very poignantly when he says: "A Protestant is one who is in prison, knowing that he has been acquitted."¹ We hold that a Catholic is one who has emerged from prison. For us, liberation has already been won.

*The Eschatological Significance of the
Conversion of the Jews*

The destiny of the Jewish people is the most mysterious of God's designs. One can at best catch a glimpse of it. Certainly, the great danger for Christianity would have been for it to remain bound to Judaism. The end of the old order, whose purpose has been the election of God's chosen people in order to make possible the coming of a wholly new world, had to be manifested in some way. If Judaism had been converted to Christianity in its entirety, it might have remained dominant in Christianity, and this could have been a tremendous obstacle to evangelization. The rupture was a means of demonstrating to the Gentiles

¹ Translator was unable to track down the source of this statement.

the transition from the Jewish religion to the universal religion. Here again we catch a glimpse of the mysterious wisdom of God's plan. And let us not forget that the malediction of a race does not imply the condemnation of its individual members. It would be intolerable for God to have condemned to eternal damnation an entire race, and especially its common people. This would be in absolute contradiction to the spirit of Saint Paul, for it is evident that Saint Paul retained great love for his brothers and exalted their greatness.

The truth of the matter is that God's plan may at certain moments strike down a race all of whose members may none the less be saved individually. There were some Jews who bore great responsibility for Christ's condemnation; but, as a whole, "they knew not what they did," as Christ Himself has said. When Saint Paul persecuted the Christians he did so in good faith, convinced that he was doing God's work. This is a typical example. Thus, it cannot be said that there has been a condemnation of the Jews individually. Rather, it was in God's plan that this people, as a people, should be cast aside for a while. As Saint Paul says, "if the offence of them be the riches of the world"—a remarkable expression, when we reflect on it—"and the diminution of them, the riches of the Gentiles; how much more the fulness of them?"¹ Here is a presage of future glory for the Jewish people, which is astonishing in Saint Paul: the Jewish people will one day experience plenitude, but for the time being their fall is the riches of the world.

Besides, we can well understand the reasons for their refusal. They did not consent to being pushed back into the ranks. Socially, it was almost impossible for them to accept. A people or a class renounces its privilege only

¹ *Romans*, XI, 12.

with great reluctance. What God asked of the Jews was for them to cease being the chosen people, His only people, after they had for nineteen centuries basked in the pride of being the firstborn of God.

CHAPTER VI

THE MISSION OF THE HOLY GHOST

THE MISSION, that is, the evangelization of all nations, is the present mystery of the Church. From the time of the Ascension of Our Lord into heaven until His return in the fulness of time to take final possession of His kingdom, this is the great reality that fills the history of the world, through all its external vicissitudes. When this evangelization has been completed, Christ will come back, the work of His apostles having been accomplished.

Now, this evangelization of the world began on Pentecost, with the coming of the Holy Ghost. In the first Epistle of Saint Peter we read: "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and diligently searched, who prophesied of the grace to come in you. Searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ in them did signify: when it foretold those sufferings that are in Christ, and the glories that should follow: To whom it is revealed, that not to themselves, but to you they ministered those things which are now declared to you by them that have preached the gospel to you, the Holy Ghost being sent down from heaven, on whom the angels desire to look."¹

The scene of Pentecost, which inaugurated this "profound mystery" demonstrates its missionary significance. It is remarkable that the effect of the descent of the Holy Ghost on the Apostles should have been that they began to speak "with divers tongues." Indeed, "the multitude came together, and were confounded in mind, because

¹ 1 *Peter*, I, 10-12.

that every man heard them speak in his own tongue. And they were all amazed, and wondered, saying: . . . how have we heard, every man our own tongue wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphilia, Egypt, and the parts of Lybia about Cyrene . . ."¹

Whatever the nature of this miracle of tongues, it has immense significance: namely, that the descent of the Holy Ghost coincides with the beginning of the evangelization of all nations, that it marks—and this is what Pentecost really means—that the economy that had existed until then and had reserved God's message for the Jewish people alone, had collapsed, and from that moment the universalism of the Church began.

We can scarcely avoid setting in juxtaposition to this scene of Pentecost, another scene that has an obvious connection with it, the scene of the tower of Babel. Moreover, the contrast was brought out long since and it is compelling. At the tower of Babel, men who until then had been members of a single family became, in consequence of their sin, separated by confusion and the division of tongues. Sin, therefore, ends in division, and the sign of this division is the lack of comprehension that exists among men. Pentecost restored what had been broken; once again men of all nations communicated in the unity of the Spirit, by virtue of which a common language has been restored. Thus, the mystery of Pentecost inaugurated the economy in which we now live. This economy is characterized on the one hand by universalism, that is, the evangelization of all nations and their gathering within the unity of the Church; and on the other hand by the presence of the Holy Ghost.

¹ *Acts of the Apostles*, II, 6-10.

Having said this much, we shall now try to see how the coming of the Holy Ghost, the principle of all missionary action, was first accomplished in the person of Our Lord, Who was the first to fulfil in Himself the missionary vocation. Then we shall inquire how, after Pentecost, Our Lord, once again in the glory of His Father, communicated this Spirit to His Church. This aspect of Our Lord's personality is rarely stressed.

Much is written about the relations of Christ with His Father. Less is written about the relations of Christ with the Holy Ghost. Yet all through the Gospel there is a very close bond between Our Lord and the Holy Ghost. This bond is related to a special aspect of Christ's person, which I shall call His prophetic ministry. Our Lord performed three great ministries, each of which carried on the work of the Old Testament and was afterwards continued in the Church. There is His royal ministry, by reason of which He is the Lord of all nations. This ministry finds its noblest expression in the Ascension, when Our Lord comes into possession of His sovereignty, when He is elevated above all the heavens, and reigns over the entire universe. There is also His priestly ministry through which He offers up to the Father the perfect sacrifice of His Passion. Finally, there is the prophetic ministry through which He proclaims the mystery, that is to say, the realities of the divine life and of our participation in this life.

This prophetic ministry, fulfilled by Our Lord and then continued in His Church, was prefigured in the Old Testament. In this respect, as in many others, Our Lord carries on what has been begun in the Old Testament and He prepares what is to be completed by the Church. Since the days of the Covenant men have been seized by the Spirit to accomplish missions. These are what we call

Messias, the anointed, "*Spiritus unxit me*—The Spirit hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor."¹ Our Lord applied these words of Isaias to Himself. In the Credo the bond between the Spirit and prophecy is very close.

Let us explain what we mean by prophecy. When we speak of Christ's prophetic ministry, or when Saint Paul speaks of the gift of prophecy given by the Holy Ghost, what is referred to is not necessarily the gift of proclaiming future events; rather is reference made to the prophet as the revealer of the mystery, speaking in God's name. And what is this mystery? It is the divine plan by which the Father adopts us in His Son, by progressive stages, so that He may ultimately introduce us into His kingdom. This plan is the object of all prophecy. In this sense, it always refers to the future, for it is in process of being accomplished, and thus the prophet is always oriented toward a future event, the full realization of God's design. Prophets are those who announce this design, who describe it beforehand, who help men to orient themselves towards its fulfilment. This is the difference between a prophet and a sage or a philosopher: the latter are men who reveal eternal truths to us; whereas the prophet is a man who announces a future event. This reminds us once again that Christianity is essentially a history, the history of the Holy Ghost, Who is at work in the world and Who is transforming the world.

Looking over the life of Our Lord, at what moment can we say that He received this prophetic unction? At what moment did the Spirit descend upon Him to take possession of Him and send Him forth as a prophet? It was at the threshold of His public life, during the extraordinary episode of His baptism, an event whose importance we often

¹ *Luke*, IV, 18.

tend to minimize. Up until then, Our Lord had lived a hidden life, during which God was mysteriously preparing Him for His mission. On the day of His baptism He was anointed by the Spirit Who, having been sent by the Father, descended upon Him to inaugurate His public ministry.

In a book on the Word Incarnate,¹ in which he makes a study of Christ's various ministries, the Russian theologian Bulgakov emphasizes the fact that at the start of each of these ministries there is a descent of the Spirit and a special manifestation from God. He, too, relates the prophetic ministry of Christ to the manifestation of the Trinity at Christ's baptism, and he observes that there is in the Gospel a second remarkable manifestation of the Blessed Trinity surrounding the person of Our Lord: the Transfiguration. From the moment of His Transfiguration Our Lord practically halted His prophetic ministry, and all His activity was oriented toward preparation for the Passion. Here was a second manifestation of the Trinity, inaugurating the priestly ministry of Our Lord, whose consummation was to be the Passion. There is a remarkable parallelism between these two theophanies of the Trinity and the two ministries, prophetic and sacerdotal.

For the present, we shall dwell only on the baptism, because it inaugurated the prophetic ministry. The Holy Ghost descended upon Our Lord, and afterwards led Him into the desert. Then Christ came back in the Holy Ghost to preach in Galilee. Indeed, Our Lord Himself, in the first congregation at the synagogue, spoke of the effusion of the Holy Ghost upon His Person: "And he came to Nazareth, where he was brought up: and he went into the synagogue, according to his custom, on the sabbath-day; and he rose

¹ Rev. Sergei Nikolaevich Bulgakov, *Du Verbe Incarné* (Agnus Dei), Trans. from Russian by Constantin Andromkoff, Paris, Aubier, Ed. Montaigne, 1943, 382 pp.

up to read. And the book of Isaias the prophet was delivered unto him. And as he unfolded the book, he found the place where it was written: The spirit of the Lord is upon me, wherefore he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the contrite of heart: To preach deliverance to the captives, and sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised. . . . And he began to say to them: This day is fulfilled this scripture in your ears."¹

We may be surprised to find Our Lord referred to as a Prophet, and indeed we may not be accustomed to it. Yet in the New Testament, this is one of the titles given to Him. One of the most notable passages in this connection is the one about the disciples of Emmaus. These disciples, not knowing they were speaking to the Lord, told him of all that had been happening: "Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things that have been done there in these days? To whom he said: What things? And they said: Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet, mighty in work and word before God and all the people."²

Continuing our analysis, Our Lord's prophetic ministry was manifested by two powers: first, by the power of the spoken word. The Prophet is essentially one who announces the mystery and whose spoken word possesses the efficacy to convert souls. That is the basic attribute of prophetic speech, that is, of speech that is not of human origin, but of the Holy Ghost Himself. That is the difference between prophetic speech, the message of the Christian preacher on the one hand, and the message of the lecturer or of the philosopher. The former is endowed with prophetic efficacy that touches men's hearts and transforms them. The words of the true Christian apostle, the true missionary,

¹ Luke, IV, 16-21.

² Luke, XXIV, 18-19.

are endowed with divine virtue, and thereby possess a mysterious efficacy that human speech could never possess. And note well that this power is not the power of reason. Saint Paul lays great emphasis on this in the Acts of the Apostles: that it is not by virtue of human wisdom that the apostle speaks. On the contrary, he must disburden himself of all human artifices.

Saint Paul had tried to make use of human wisdom when he preached in Athens, where, finding himself in an intellectual milieu, he was tempted to play the intellectual. He learned that was not the way to spread God's message, for this message derives its efficacy from the virtue of the Holy Ghost, and it is in the virtue of the Holy Ghost that the apostle must speak. This does not mean, however, that the apostle is not to become all things to all men, nor to present Christ's message in a manner that appeals to the mentality and spirit of those whom he is addressing, nor to take into account the different elements of incarnation in different lands. But it does mean that fundamentally his message will rest on the power of God alone. Remember what Our Lord told His disciples: that they need not be concerned about what to say when they came before tribunals, for the Holy Ghost Himself would indicate what they were to say.

The preaching of God's word is an event, something that happens. It is not a purely intellectual reality. Karl Barth has said some admirable things on this subject.¹ As he sees it, the position of a Christian preacher is the position of a man who knows he is only a man, and at the same time knows that he must speak about God. Now, as Barth says very cogently, one does not speak about God. Only God speaks about God, man is powerless to do so;

¹ Karl Barth: *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, translated by Douglas Horton, the Pilgrim Press (Boston, Chicago), 1928, 327 pp.

and it is the preacher's tragic plight that he must speak about God, knowing that only the Holy Ghost is capable of so doing. Unless it is the Holy Ghost Who touches hearts and enlightens them, the preacher is wasting his time, he is a tinkling cymbal.

This is of capital importance for the mission, a fact that is brought home to us at the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles. The Apostles spoke in the power of the Spirit, and their words had marvellous efficacy for the conversion of souls. Why do not our words convert more people today? Is it because we do not know how to present our subject? Yet, since the days of Saint Peter and Saint Paul we have discerned admirable arguments to explain and justify our religion. So we do not lack good arguments. In fact we have far better reasons for believing than Saint Peter and Saint Paul had. Theologians have discovered numerous reasons, and yet God's word has no greater efficacy. Thus, it is a matter not of finding good reasons, but of the efficacy of the Spirit. We are not efficacious because we have too little faith, because we do not confess our belief in Christ, placing our trust in the power of the Spirit.

In the second place, the prophetic ministry includes not only the efficacy of the word, but also the efficacy of works. And this is a fundamental and very mysterious aspect of Christ's prophetic ministry, of the prophetic ministry of the Prophets, and that of the first Apostles. Indeed, their message was buttressed by extraordinary works, *mirabilia*, miracles, and there is a very close link between miracles and prophecy.

Our Lord has often stressed this in the Gospel: miracles are testimony given to Him by His Father. And the great works that He accomplished proved that His kingdom had come. In the Old Testament, the great prophet Elisha

also attested to the authenticity of his ministry by the extraordinary works he accomplished. Yet we get the impression that he had much more trouble performing miracles than Our Lord had. In order to bring a dead man back to life Elisha was obliged to lie on him twice before the dead man decided to resuscitate, whereas Our Lord—and this shows the vast difference between the Old and the New Testament—said to the little girl: “Maid, arise.”¹ And the girl arose. His word was sufficient to perform miracles.

It is remarkable that even in the Old Testament miracles are closely linked to the public ministry. In the Gospel, these miracles that we sometimes have difficulty in understanding are an aspect of the prophetic ministry of Our Lord. They attest to the presence within Him of the Holy Ghost, through Whom He performed great works. It is through the Holy Ghost that all things are created, and His power continues to have divine efficacy for performing extraordinary things. After Pentecost the Apostles also accomplished miracles that attested to the presence of the Holy Spirit within them. We should keep all this well in mind. Since the days of the Apostles, miracles have been rarer. However, miracles are realities even today, and the great saints of the nineteenth century, for example, the Curé d’Ars and Dom Bosco accompanied their preaching with extraordinary works. The power of the Spirit has not diminished. The Prophet is still a person mighty in words and in works.

In yet another way Our Lord carried on and even went beyond the prophetic ministry. This derives from the fact that the prophetic ministry has always been accompanied by persecution. Our Lord often comes back to this idea in the Gospel: “Just as your fathers persecuted the Prophets, so you, too, persecute me.”²

¹ Luke, VIII, 54.

² Paraphrase from *Matthew*, XXIII, 31-4.

There is nothing new, therefore, in the fact that Our Lord was persecuted. His Passion was part of a long and continuous persecution of the Prophets, which started from the very beginnings of the Old Testament, and was consummated in Him. And when Our Lord tells us that the Old Testament foretold His Passion, we are sometimes at a loss where to seek this prophecy. In reality it is to be found in the persecution with which the Jews had always pursued the Prophets, who were symbols of Christ.

Christ's death, which as a sacrifice is related to His priestly ministry, as martyrdom is related to His prophetic ministry. Martyrdom is essentially testimony. Christ's martyrdom carries on the testimony that all the Prophets had borne, and of which His Passion was the most perfect example. In its turn, it was to be the model for the Apostles who were to be called on to bear witness even to martyrdom, that is, even to giving up their lives in testimony to the truth of their words.

These realities all seem clearer to us when we understand that they are not new, but are part of a continuity of which they are but the culmination. At the same time, a break does exist, and with the baptism of Jesus something really new begins. As a matter of fact, from then on ancient prophecy was superseded: the Holy Ghost, Who had dispersed His utterance among the diverse Prophets, was thenceforth to concentrate entirely on the person of Our Lord. What happened to the prophecies is analogous to what happened to the temple. Indeed prophecies and temple are closely linked.

Just as, from the time of Our Lord's coming, and particularly from the time of His Passion, the temple in Jerusalem lost its age-old function and God took up His dwelling in the person of Our Lord, likewise, from then on the Prophets were superseded and the spirit of prophecy

passed in its entirety into Our Lord. The visible manifestation of this suppression was the life of Saint John the Baptist, who from that moment was cast aside, his mission having been accomplished. As soon as Our Lord's public ministry began, all Saint John's disciples were to abandon him and go over to Our Lord. Moreover, John himself, because he was initiated into the mystery and was inwardly enlightened by the Holy Ghost, entered right into God's plan and uttered the incomparable words "He must increase, and I must decrease."¹ — "The friend of the Bridegroom rejoiceth with joy because of the Bridegroom's voice."²

It is important to view all this in the perspective of prophecy: Saint John, baptizing Christ, is the last of the great prophets of the Old Testament; he brings together within himself all the prophetic spirit that had preceded him, and he attests to the termination of the Old Testament prophecy by retiring into the background to give place from then on to Him Who is the heir to all these traditions and Who is Our Lord. Saint Justin, in the *Dialogue with Tryphon*, indicates in the following remarkable passage how the Holy Ghost Who had dwelt in the Prophets now passed into Our Lord:

"Your prophets," he says, "have each received from God one or another of these powers; and they have acted as we are told in the Scriptures. Solomon had the spirit of wisdom, Daniel, that of understanding and counsel, Moses, that of strength and piety, Elias, that of fear, Isaias, that of knowledge. Each one possessed one power, or alternatively one or the other. . . . The Holy Ghost rested, that is to say, ceased (from that operation) when the One came, after Whom all things were to disappear from your midst, when His kingdom was established among men;

¹ *John*, III, 30.

² *John*, III, 29.

but in Him were again to appear and to abide, according to prophecy, the gifts that He grants, by the grace of the power of this Spirit, to those who believe in Him. One prophecy announced that this was to be accomplished by Him after His Ascension into heaven. I have already affirmed and I repeat: He ascended on high. He took with Him the throng of captives . . . It has also been said in another prophecy: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, I will pour out of my Spirit upon my servants and upon my handmaids'.¹

Justin continues in a manner that touches us deeply: "And we can see among us men and women who have received charisms (gifts) of the Holy Ghost; therefore, it was not because He was lacking in power that He prophesied that these powers were to come upon Him, but because they were not to exist in anyone after Him."²

Thus, Saint Justin understood that these men and women had received the charisms (gifts) of the Spirit of God, therein accomplishing the prophecy. This brings us up to the time in which we are now living, that is, to the effusion of the Holy Ghost upon the Church. This effusion of the Holy Ghost, which is gathered up, as it were, in the person of Our Lord, is possessed by Our Lord only that He may pour it out upon His Church; and that is what we understand Pentecost to mean.

In this manner, the text of the prophet Joel, to which Justin alludes and which is also cited at the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles, is accomplished on Pentecost: "And it shall come to pass in the last days . . ." Notice the words "last days," stressing the eschatological nature of missionary reality, that is, that we are really living in the

¹ Justin, *Dialogue with Tryphon*, LXXXVII, 4-8.

² Justin, *op. cit.*, LXXXVIII, 1.

last days. These last days may be prolonged but they are none the less the last days, because after them will come the end, the Second Coming. "It shall come to pass," says Joel, "I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and daughters shall prophesy."¹

Therefore, we see that this prophetic ministry that was the ministry of the ancient Prophets and the ministry of Christ, is also the ministry of all Christians. There is a prophetic ministry in the Church in the measure that "The Holy Ghost is poured out upon your sons and daughters." "And your young men will see visions, and your old men dream dreams. And upon my servants, indeed, and upon my handmaids, will I pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. And I will shew wonders in the heaven above, and signs on the earth beneath: blood and fire, and vapour of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and manifest day of the Lord come."²

It is truly remarkable that the sequence in all these texts should always be the same: The descent of the Holy Ghost, and the evangelization of all flesh, then the harbingers: "The sun turned into darkness, and the moon into blood," before the day of the Lord, that is to say, the Second Coming. We should note the close relationships between these realities when seen in this perspective, which is precisely the perspective of the early Christians. The idea of the eschatological nature of the mission is ever present. Viewed in this perspective, everything takes on an extraordinary simplicity; the succession of events, the unfolding of the mystery, becomes almost limp. We realize only that we must enter into it by prayer and through the Spirit, and strive to understand it.

¹ Joel, II, 28, cited in the *Acts of the Apostles*, II, 17.

² Joel, II, 28 and 32, cited in the *Acts of the Apostles*, II, 17-21.

How does the effusion of the Spirit on the Apostles become manifest in the Church? In two fundamental ways: This was true even in the Old Testament, but more especially in the New. As a matter of fact, it has a twofold end: The first, which we are not here considering, is to sanctify us by making the divine life operative in us; in this sense, it is the Holy Ghost Whom we receive in Baptism and Who, as a living principle, gradually transforms us by nurturing in us an awareness of the things of God through faith; by developing in us the love of God and of others through charity; by increasing in us the hope that makes us adhere to divine realities; by giving us His gifts through which we come to have antennae, as it were, that bring us close to God and enable us to respond to divine touches; by making us capable of being taught and led by the Spirit. The fruits of the Holy Ghost are the infinitely delicate and wonderful psychology of the Christian soul by which all these perfect virtues of long-suffering, purity, saintliness, kindness, develop within us by the action of the Spirit.

That is one way in which the Spirit acts within each one of us and transforms us. But there is a second action of the Spirit, oriented directly toward the mission, and by which the Spirit makes us capable of bearing witness and therefore of evangelizing, by giving us what is known as charisms. These charisms are defined by the theologians as gifts of God that are made *ad extra*, that is to say, in view of the external work to be accomplished; to a certain extent they may not be accompanied by personal sanctity, although their full development depends on it; but they are always linked to the function to be performed.

It is very remarkable to notice in the Acts of the Apostles, which have been called the Gospel of the Holy Ghost, that the entire missionary achievement of the Apostles is attributed to the Holy Ghost acting within them. We

might cite innumerable texts in the Acts which depict the Holy Ghost leading the first Apostles. I shall choose a few texts at random. Immediately after Pentecost, during the first days at Jerusalem, the Jewish tribunal ordered Peter, James and John to appear before it; and the text says: "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost . . ." ¹ A little farther on in the Acts: "Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business." ² Even more characteristic is the scene in which Philip baptizes the Ethiopian minister of Queen Candace: "And the Spirit said to Philip: Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip running thither, heard him reading the prophet Isaias . . . And as they went their way, they came to a certain water; and the eunuch said: See, here is water: What doth hinder me from being baptized? . . . And he commanded the chariot to stand still, and they went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch: and he baptized him." ³ Likewise, in the sequel to the Acts of the Apostles, the Spirit led Saint Paul, directing him wherever he was to accomplish his mission.

This action of the Spirit is manifested by charisms. It was Saint Paul who spoke most of them, for example, in the first Epistle to the Corinthians: "Now, concerning spiritual things, my brethren, I would not have you ignorant . . . Now there are diversities of graces, but the same Spirit; And there are diversities of ministries, but the same Lord; And there are diversities of operations, but the same God, who worketh all in all. And the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man unto profit. To one indeed, by the Spirit, is given the word of wisdom: and to another, the

¹ *Acts of the Apostles*, IV, 8.

² *Acts of the Apostles*, VI, 3.

³ *Acts of the Apostles*, VIII, 29-38.

word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit; to another, faith in the same Spirit; to another, the grace of healing in one Spirit; to another, the working of miracles; to another, prophecy; to another, the discerning of spirits; to another, diverse kinds of tongues; to another, interpretation of speeches.”¹

In this text we find mention of all the attributes of the Spirit of Prophecy, as we have so far presented them. First of all, there is prophecy, then the power to perform miracles, the word of knowledge, the power in words, coming after the power in works; and at the end there is the gift of tongues, whose relation to Pentecost is so mysterious.

The listing of these various charisms which make the Apostles capable of accomplishing their prophetic ministry—and in consequence of evangelizing all nations—would not be complete without reference to the texts in which Saint Paul describes the interior gifts through which the Spirit strengthens the Apostles so that they may be capable of accomplishing their mission. In these texts, three great traits are stressed: On the one hand, strength, magnanimity, the habit of overcoming extraordinary difficulties and of affronting them with assurance in the power of the Spirit of God. Second, wisdom and the knowledge of divine matters, through which the Holy Ghost, Who alone, as Saint Paul says, sounds the depths of God, enlightens the intelligence of the Apostles and makes them capable of understanding the things that are of God, and of communicating them to others. And finally, unity is absolutely necessary to the Apostles, since it is a single spirit acting within them that must prevent all rivalry or contention among them, and in some manner gather together into one sheaf the diversity of charisms, with a view to the accomplishment of the one task.

¹ 1 *Corinthians*, XII, 1-10.

As Justin tells us, whereas in the Old Testament these charisms were divided, one bestowed on Isaiah, another on David, still another on Daniel, they were gathered together in the person of Christ and once again distributed among the different members of Christ, each having his own particular grace for the accomplishment of his own task. These charisms are continued in the Church today through the diversity of spiritual families and through the variety of vocations, each one being heir to one of these gifts. This is what wholly justifies the diversity within the Church of God. The apostle does not say to the contemplative, or the contemplative to the apostle: "I have received the better part," for each has his own special charism and seeks to fulfil it in charity.

To conclude on a missionary note, we can say that we live in a time of the revelation of the Holy Spirit, not only in the sense in which that has always been true since Pentecost, but in the special sense that today we ourselves are more and more aware of and concerned about the Holy Spirit. The mystery of Christ was accomplished in His Ascension. On the other hand, the mystery of the Holy Ghost is not yet wholly accomplished amongst men. We shall know Him completely only when all nations shall have been evangelised.

In this connection, the races of the Orient, and especially India—which will perhaps be the last nation to be evangelized—have a very special relation to the Holy Ghost. Why? Because at the very root of Indian doctrine is the conception of God as spirit immanent in all things. India interprets this falsely in that she sees in this spirit the very substance of all things. This is not true, but it does dispose India toward an understanding of the expression: *Spiritus Domini replevit orbem terrarum*.

There is no sentence in the entire Scriptures that can touch the soul of India as much as this one: "*Spiritus Domini replevit orbem terrarum*—The spirit of the Lord hath filled the whole world."¹ It will be necessary to replace *Spiritus* by *atman* . . . and, in this *atman*, to see not an immanent God but the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, for indeed it is proper to the Holy Ghost to be the gift of God. The Father is the One Who communicates and Who is the source whence all things come. The Son is the One through Whom all things are communicated, and is in a way the model, the formulation and the definition—and that is why the Occident, which loves what is definite, has been predisposed to understand the mystery of the Word. The mentality of India, on the other hand, will be more ready to contemplate the mystery of the Holy Ghost, the Sanctifier of the cosmos, in Whom God penetrates the entire world.

We may be permitted to think, therefore, that we shall also possess a much fuller theology of the Holy Ghost, for this idea is very close to our hearts. That will come about the day that His theology is expressed in the thought of India; this is the true vocation of Indian thought, just as the vocation of Greek thought was to express the dogma of the God-Man.²

Theology will be completed the day evangelization comes to an end, the day all nations know Christ, the day the entire world has heard the Gospel, the day Christ can come to take possession of a domain that will have been made completely ready for Him, and when all nations will each in turn have borne testimony to Him. This is the final aspect of the very close bond existing not only between the

¹ *Wisdom*, I, 7.

² See Monchanin, *Le Saint-Esprit et L'Inde*, Cahiers, Dieu Vivant III (Ed. du Seuil).

doctrine of the Holy Ghost and the missionary vocation in general, but also between it and India's particular vocation. Let this be one more reason for us to yearn for the conversion of the nations of the Orient. We aspire not only towards the plenitude of charity but also towards the plenitude of light. Not only shall we enjoy a vast blossoming of charity when all nations are gathered together in Christ, but also an increase in light in the measure that revelation becomes more luminous to us by having been expressed through all the nations of the earth.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE

The Sin Against the Holy Ghost

This sin has been interpreted in terms of the successive economies of Revelation. The sin against Christ would consist in rejecting Our Lord before the coming of the Holy Ghost. The sin against the Holy Ghost would be the refusal to accept the Spirit after Pentecost. The sin of the Jews who rejected the Spirit after Pentecost is more serious than the sin of the Jews who put Christ to death.

There is another related explanation: In Christ there are both God and man, and the sin against Christ is not necessarily a sin against God (save in the sense in which all sins are against God). It is the fact of not having recognized God in the Man Jesus, but this can bear on the humanity of Our Lord and not be a sin directly against God, whereas the sin against the Spirit would be a direct rejection of God, a blasphemy against God.

What is true of Christ is true in a sense also of the Church. Many men see only the human side of the Church

and reject it because of that: their sin is not the sin against the Spirit, and we can believe that it will be forgiven. The sin against the Spirit, in this case, would be the sin of those who are cognizant of the divine nature of the Church and yet refuse through pride to acknowledge it.

CHAPTER VII

THE GLORY OF GOD

IN CONCLUSION, we shall try to bring out a few of the features of a missionary spirituality, that is, of a Christian spirituality oriented towards the extension of the Kingdom of God in the world. I would like to show that the apostolic spirit is authentic only in the measure that it is deeply rooted in the spirit of contemplation, that it is but the blossoming, the fruition of the life of praise. It is contemplation of God that arouses in us the desire to make Him known and loved. This resolves perhaps the most difficult of all the problems raised by the missionary apostolate, one which can often prevent us from grasping the full significance of this apostolate. The problem is this: Present-day theologians, continuing the thought of theologians of former times, ask themselves what is the fate of souls outside the Church. Inasmuch as all pagans, all Buddhists, all Moslems are outside the Church, are they thereby excluded from salvation? What is the exact meaning of the formula: "Outside of the Church there is no salvation?" Now, most theologians hold that belonging to the visible Church is not absolutely necessary to salvation; there are substitutes for visible membership in the Church, and we can feel justified in believing that souls of good-will outside the Church are saved.

But why, then, do we have missions? If these souls can be saved without visible membership in the Church, why not leave them to their good intentions; if Buddhism for some, and Islam for others can prove a way to find God, what

need is there of pulling them out of their error and of bringing the Gospel to them? I am not saying that this completely destroys the importance of the missionary apostolate, whose aim will always be to bring them a greater good within the Church, but it might seem to diminish its urgency.

In reality, this problem is based on incorrect premises. The source of the apostolate is not necessity but the exigency of love. What must arouse the missionary vocation in us is, first of all, not the need of souls to be saved, but love of God which leads us to want Him to be known and loved. The authentic missionary call has its origin in the pain we feel because Christ is not known or loved. Now, this exigency of love is more urgent than any necessity could be. Here we have a twofold movement: We desire to bring Christ to souls, and we desire to bring souls to Christ. Too often, we think only of the first: that we must bring Christ to souls. If we go no farther than that, there is danger that our missionary call will not be urgent enough, and may run foul of certain objections. But if we also insist on the other aspect: that we want to bring souls to Christ because this is the only efficacious proof of love we can give Him (indeed, we can add nothing to His interior glory, but only to His external glory); then, the apostolic spirit, flowing from a love of Christ, takes on an implacable urgency. It is in this love that the great Apostles have found their *élan* towards souls. "Where," Saint Ignatius once wrote to some young religious, "is the majesty of our God adored? Where are His infinite goodness and His infinite patience known?"

It is very important that our missionary spirituality should be centred, first of all, in God. In our time, spirituality is often too anthropocentric, oriented too much toward the good of humanity as such. This degrades its most essential

religious content, and it ends up by being an extension of humanism. It is because we love our fellow men that we want them to have all good things, including the benefits of religion; but the starting point remains human. An authentic missionary spirituality must include this attitude, but above all else, it must have its source in love of God and of Christ. In consequence, it must be perpetually rooted in contemplation, which maintains within us this sense of God.

In order to grasp this idea fully, let us first reflect on the exact nature of the spirit of praise, inasmuch as the missionary spirit flows from it. The spirit of praise is the recognition of the transcendence of God. God is the absolute sovereign on Whom all things depend at each instant, so that nothing whatever would exist if He did not maintain it in existence. In His presence the nations of the world are as a drop of water. Such thought helps us to see things in their true perspective. We are myopic, and visible things take on in our eyes an importance disproportionate to their real value; and by contrast, the things of God, which are distant, are somewhat undervalued. The spirit of praise consists in re-establishing a true perspective, putting things in their proper order, treating God as God and human things as human things.

Now to treat God as God means, little by little, to discover His greatness. The greatness of God is, first of all, His immensity beyond the grasp of our imagination, so vast that the mind staggers when we try to understand it, for no created imagination can give us any idea of it. This greatness arouses in us a sort of religious fear that one writer has called the *tremendum*,¹ a dread that is hardly in itself anything religious. This greatness is so much beyond us that it makes us feel out of our element, in its presence we become aware of our own infinite smallness. Abraham

¹ Otto, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

expressed this feeling in the Old Testament when he said, after appearing before God: "I will speak to my Lord, whereas I am dust and ashes."¹

But God is not only this greatness that completely disconcerts our minds. He is still more than that. He is even farther beyond our reach because of His excellence. Strictly speaking, if He were nothing but power, the feeling He might arouse in us might very well be one of revolt. It is understandable that an infinitely great and infinitely powerful being, who was not at the same time supremely benevolent, might well arouse such a sentiment in certain human souls. The fact that certain men—and there have been many in our time, Nietzsche, for example—have revolted against God and thought that greatness in man consisted in affirming oneself against Him, results from their seeing in God, above all, sovereign greatness and not that completely ravishing quality which thrusts itself upon us, not merely as a power that overwhelms but as an excellence whose seduction we are helpless to resist.

This brings us to a much deeper aspect of the spirit of praise: God's attraction is so compelling that the moment we glimpse it, it draws from our souls the cry of that admiration by which the soul knows that it adores. Adoration is that highest form of admiration addressed only to God because He absolutely surpasses all limitations that creatures bring to their admiration. And this is the noblest sentiment a man can experience.

Admiration for God arouses two other sentiments which seem to be opposed but in reality complement each other very well. The first is the feeling of fear in the presence of such excellence, because the more we understand how holy God is, the more conscious we are of our own impurity and all that is wretched within us. The other sentiment

¹ *Genesis*, XVIII, 27.

is the desire to possess this excellent good and to be united to Him. All of religious life consists in the dialectic of these two elements: the more we know God the more we want to become purified so that we can become more closely united to Him.

A final aspect must be mentioned, and it is the most important from our point of view: Namely, that God's excellence arouses in us a selfless desire to please Him, leading us to love His excellence for itself and not merely for ourselves. We rejoice that God possesses such excellence and we wish God all that is best. Loving God so much and realizing how much he deserves to be known and loved, we become painfully aware of the scandal that God is not known and is not loved. This, to me, is the true awakening of the authentic missionary spirit.

We can find models of this missionary spirit in many of the great apostolic figures or in John the Baptist, whose lives were so characteristic of the kingdom of God and of total self-effacement before Christ's coming within souls. Going more deeply still, we can find its perfect expression in the person of Our Lord Himself, Whose entire work was founded on His desire for the glorification of the Father and on the total subordination of His own interest, of His own glory, to the glory of the Father.

Christ did not seek His own glory. He never sought it, whereas He might with justice have done so, in view of the excellence that was His. He sought only the glory of the Father. There was always in Him a desire to bring all things to the Father, to bring souls to Him, and always to do His will. "(The Father loves me) for I do always the things that please him."¹ "He that speaketh of himself, seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh the glory of him that sent him, he is true, and there is no injustice in him."²

¹ *John*, VIII, 29.

² *John*, VII, 18.

This is always the mark of those who truly follow Our Lord and who enter into His spirit. The sign of an authentic missionary is selflessness. The moment an apostolate becomes personal, that it begins to be a personal influence, that it is carried forward by personal influence, that it is carried forward by personal views, that we seek to hold on to souls and not simply to lead them to Christ, from that very moment everything collapses and we are no longer doing Christ's work. The important thing is that good be accomplished, that is, that souls learn to know Christ. But it matters little whether it is accomplished by us or by others! We must be capable of rejoicing as much over the good that is accomplished by others as over the good that we ourselves or our close friends accomplish.

Missionary joy, the joy we spoke of in respect to John the Baptist, consists in rejoicing that Christ is known and that He is loved. In consequence, every time we learn that new souls have come close to Him, that new lands have opened themselves to Him, we should experience a very pure joy because a soul has found its Bridegroom. It should not matter to us that this has been accomplished by others, or even that we ourselves may never be able to do anything of this sort because it is not our vocation. Things like that do not prevent the apostolic soul from rejoicing in spirit because it is profoundly happy, in its love for God, to see that He is increasingly known and loved. And, on the other hand, the suffering of the apostolic soul does not arise from the fact that its own action is restricted to the area assigned to it, within which it may have some measure of success; rather does it consist in realizing that beyond this small sphere of action there may yet be entire worlds that remain closed to the coming of Christ, strangers to the unity of God's creatures. Péguy has written: "Tant qu'il y a un homme dehors, la porte qui se ferme sur lui ferme une

cit  d'injustice et de haine." ¹ He was speaking of temporal society, but his words reveal a magnificent intuition.

This deep need of bringing everything back to unity is the fundamental missionary aspiration, but on the spiritual and not the temporal level. The missionary soul is deeply wounded by the disorder implicit in the fact that there are men, peoples, races, still strangers to the city of God. But we are not conscious enough of this disorder. Why? Because we do not have a great enough sense of unity. Now, the soul of Our Lord felt this very deeply. It is a feeling that we surmise was very strong in Him in the Garden of Gethsemani. We can visualize the anguish of His soul in the face of all that yet eluded Him, all that He had not yet succeeded in bringing back into unity, in joining to the Father.

Let us delve deeper into this disposition of Our Lord's heart, for it is always to Him that we must come back if we want to learn what are the fundamental Christian dispositions. "I have not a devil: but I honour my Father . . . I seek not my own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth. . . . If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father that glorifieth me, of whom you say that he is your God. And you have not known him. . . ." ²

One often hears the remark, when there is question of a missionary vocation: But, after all, why go so far? There is so much good to be done here. One gets the impression that it would be best—and this is a human reaction—first to attend to one's own affairs, and then to take care of the rest, if there is time. In Our Lord we find an entirely different disposition. Christ is concerned with the work of His Father. Then, He trusts His Father completely to

¹ Charles P guy, *De Jean Coste*, Paris, Gallimard, 1937.

² *John*, VIII, 49-55.

provide for His own needs. Here is a kind of blessed exchange. Likewise, the apostolic soul seems to be neglecting things that are closer at hand and more immediate; but it does so because it sees everything from the point of view of the true interests of the kingdom of God. It sees life from God's point of view and not from its own. God wants souls that are self-forgetful enough to be able to take His interests to heart. These interests comprise the salvation of the great pagan lands, the salvation of Islam, the salvation of the Jews, and the salvation of the countries that have turned away from Christ.

There is a final aspect of this total devotion of Christ to the glory of His Father: namely, that He subordinates everything to it, even to the point of completely despising His own glory in the measure that the Father requires it of Him. Men seek their own glory and disregard the glory of God. Someone was needed who would take the opposite approach, and who would seek the glory of God at the expense of his own glory, even to the extremes of self-contempt. Now, that is what Christ's Passion is. Christ was treated like a criminal. Why? In order to make reparation for all our sins of pride, but also to show us to what point it was necessary to be devoted to the glory of the Father and to scorn one's own glory.

An authentic apostolic vocation will necessarily involve some humiliation, otherwise it would not be a true following of Christ. The selflessness of the apostle must make him capable of subordinating his own interests and his own glory to the glory of the Father. And, as the Gospel tells us, to him who has been a good servant and sought the glory of the Father, the Father in His turn will give His glory, He will look upon him with immense love: "This is my beloved son." Indeed, the only reward we must hope for is that the Father be pleased. After all, we seek

nothing but that, and if He is pleased, that is, if we have been able to do our small part in bringing a few souls to Him, then our desires have been overwhelmingly fulfilled.

Thus, the apostolate appears to us as a testimony of generous love, freely given. In the Gospel nothing is forced. From beginning to end, the Gospel is a call to liberality; it is the manual of free men, of free and liberal creatures. In it, everything is ruled by love. Now, this is particularly applicable to the missionary vocation. That is why it is so imperious, for it is much more difficult to elude love than to escape from necessity. We can constantly elude love because we are frail creatures and because we spend our time belying by our acts what we truly believe, but in one sense we cannot elude it, in that we cannot escape that inner exigency of our nature, present in us of necessity and not to be denied unless we would betray all that we consider worthy of being loved and desired.

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